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# THE TRUE PRINCE

OF

# THE TRIBE OF JUDAH;

OR,

LIFE OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES.

The Crucifixion

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THE

# TRUE PRINCE

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# TRIBE OF JUDAH;

OR,

## LIFE SCENES OF THE MESSIAH.

BY REV. RUFUS W. CLARK,

AUTHOR OF "MEMOIR OF EMERSON," "HEAVEN AND ITS EMBLEMS," "LECTURES TO YOUNG MEN," "CHRISTIAN'S GIFT," ETC.

"Judah is my lawgiver." (See Psalms lx. 7.)
"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come."—DYING BLESSING OF ISRAEL. (See Gen. xlix. 10.)

TO WHICH IS ADDED, FROM DR. ADAM CLARKE, AN ACCOUNT OF THE LIVES OF ALL THE WRITERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

ALSO, THE RELIGIOUS CREED AND HISTORY OF THE JEWS, FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD TO THE PRESENT TIME.

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TO

MY FOUR GRANDPARENTS,

WHO ALL DIED AT A GOOD OLD AGE, MEMBERS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH, AND WHO ARE NOW IN HEAVEN, AND TO MY PARENTS, WHO, FROM MY EARLIEST REMEMBRANCE, HAVE BEEN CONSISTENT MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, AND WHO MUST, ACCORDING TO THE LAWS OF NATURE AND OF GOD, SOON GO TO "THAT BOURN FROM WHENCE NO TRAVELLER RETURNS,"

This Book

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY

THE COMPILER OF ITS THREE LAST CHAPTERS AND THE PRESENT OWNER OF THE COPYRIGHT.

# PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

THE advantages of this edition of the Life of Christ and his Apostles are, it is neither Roman Catholic nor Puseyite, which cannot be said of some publications offered to the American people as Protestant books. The cause of Christianity rests upon too solid a foundation to need falsehood to support it. Very little is known regarding the lives of some of the Apostles of our Saviour more than we find recorded in the Bible. Dr. Adam Clarke says, in giving the Life of St. Paul, "There is great uncertainty on these subjects; so that we cannot positively rely on any account that even the *ancients* have transmitted to us concerning the death of this apostle; and much less on the accounts given by the *moderns;* and *least of all*, on those which are to be found in the *martyrologists.*" Fleetwood says, in speaking of the death of St. Barnabas, "His kinsman, John Mark, who was a spectator of this barbarous action, privately interred his body in a cave, where it remained till the time of the Emperor Zeno, in the

year of Christ 485, when it was discovered, with St. Matthew's Gospel in Hebrew, written with his own hand, lying on his breast."

Now, why could he not as well advance the whole Roman Catholic doctrine, — winking pictures, bread actually turning to flesh, and wine actually turning to blood, and all the rest of those things disbelieved by every Protestant Christian? We submit this volume to the careful perusal of all those Protestants who are aware how particular Catholics are never to allow their people to read our books, and let us profit by their example.

# INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

This volume goes forth as a messenger to those who believe the "truth as it is in Jesus." It invites them to meditate upon the virtues and mission of their illustrious Redeemer, and mingle in those scenes of thrilling interest which constitute a prominent part of his history and labors.

The great force and beauty of the Christian dispensation lie in the fact, that every principle advanced by its founder, was illustrated in his life. He gave to the world a system of theology, not only surpassingly rich and sublime in its doctrines, and glorious in its unfoldings of immortal blessedness, but associated with a character eminent for holiness, benevolence, and every divine perfection. He lived out his own system, taught by his deeds as well as his words, and thus gained an imperishable influence, and rendered his Gospel, "the power of God and the wisdom of God."

And so varied were the circumstances into which he was thrown, and the classes of men with whom

he mingled, that something may be found in his history suited to every condition of mind, and every want of the human heart. Would the Christian advance in the divine life, — be fortified against the trials incident to his earthly career, and receive the highest stimulus to press forward for the prizes of immortality, let him study the character, and follow in the footsteps of his Redeemer. Rather than depend upon the teachings of men and systems of theology, let him go directly to the fountainhead of all truth. For one hour of communion with Christ, will afford him clearer views of duty, richer stores of knowledge, and a higher spiritual enjoyment, than whole days spent with the wisest of human authors. The electric influence thus obtained, will quicken his whole being; and the pulsations of his spiritual life will throb in sympathy with that great heart which is the vital power of religion, and the central force of the moral universe.

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# LIFE SCENES OF THE MESSIAH.

## I.

### THE FORERUNNER.

"I AM THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD, AS SAID THE PROPHET ESAIAS." — St. John i. 23.

AROUND none of the sacred characters brought to view in the Scriptures, does there gather a more thrilling and melancholy interest, than around John the Baptist. Whether we regard his life of self-denial and toil, or the importance and sublimity of his mission, or his tragical death, we find enough to excite the deepest sympathy and admiration. As a man, he possessed the most eminent virtues, energy, modesty, an entire consecration to his work. As the forerunner of the Messiah, he stood as the connecting link between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensation, fulfilling the utterances of ancient prophets, and preparing the way for the advent of the Son of God. As a martyr, his name comes down to us associated with the noblest moral principle, and

highest Christian heroism. The Great Teacher himself, who knew the hearts of all men, bore testimony to his exalted character and illustrious position: "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

Throughout Judea there was a general expectation that a harbinger would announce the coming of Christ, and prepare the minds of the people for his reception. The propet Isaiah, in those glowing visions which he had of the Messiah's reign, beheld the illustrious forerunner, and comforts Jerusalem with the announcement, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Malachi, the last of the prophets, says, speaking in the name of the Lord, "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." It being customary among the oriental nations for a herald to go before a distinguished prince or hero, and make suitable preparations for his reception, it was proper that the approach of the King of kings and Lord of lords, should be formally announced, and that the hearts of men should be made ready for his reception. Many supposed that this duty would be performed by the prophet Elijah, in accordance with the declaration of Malachi, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." This expectation was increased by the fact that Elijah had not suffered death, but was translated in a chariot to the heavenly regions. It was generally believed that

in an invisible form he hovered over the Jewish nation to protect it from danger, and the people were looking for his bodily appearance upon the earth.

But the true intent of the prophecy of Malachi, is given in the announcement which the angel made to Zacharias respecting his son. "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall be filled with the Holy Ghost. Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord. And he shall go before him *in the spirit and power of Elias*, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." In this sense Christ recognized the prophet Elijah in John the Baptist, and assured his disciples that Elias had come.

In considering the character and mission of the forerunner of Jesus, our attention is first directed to the extraordinary circumstances connected with his birth. While his father, the aged priest Zacharias, was ministering at the altar in the temple, and the people without were engaged in prayer, suddenly there appeared before him an angel, who announced that he should have a son who should be great in the sight of the Lord, filled with the Holy Ghost, and prepare the way for the Messiah. The priest, though a man eminent for his piety and devotion, was greatly terrified, and could scarcely credit what he saw and heard. The angel perceiving his fear and unbelief, said to him, "I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God: and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings." The birth of the forerunner of Jesus was an event of so

much importance, that a being who dwelt near to the throne of the Eternal, and stood in the presence of the Majesty of Heaven, was commissioned to announce the glad tidings. We cannot wonder that the aged servant of the Lord was startled by the presence and voice of such a visitant. He might, at first, have supposed that he had come to bring alarming intelligence to the Jewish nation; to announce some dreadful calamity that would befall the people. For although in the early history of the Jews, angels not unfrequently appeared in visible form, yet for a long time no such spectacle had been witnessed, even by the highest and most favored officers in the church. The mere appearance, therefore, of an angelic form after so long a period, was calculated to excite the most intense anxiety. It was usual, while the priest was offering incense in the holy place, for the people in the outer courts of the temple, to spend the season in silent prayer, and to await with much interest the return of the priest. If he was detained longer than they expected, they became alarmed lest some divine judgment might be in store for them. In this instance the stay of Zacharias being protracted beyond the usual time, a profound anxiety pervaded the whole multitude. As soon as he appeared they perceived, by the expression of his countenance, and by his inability to speak, that something remarkable had happened. The awe and reverence with which the worship of the temple was regarded, and the deep mysteries connected with the holy places into which only the priests were permitted to enter, added to the excitement; and the fact

that he could not give utterance to his thoughts, nor describe what he had seen, greatly increased the curiosity and apprehensions of the people. They must have inferred from these circumstances, that the vision was connected with some matter of great national interest.

The promise which the angel made to the venerable and devoted priest having been fulfilled, his power of speech was restored, and he praised God, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people."

Of the early history of John the Baptist, we know but little. St. Luke informs us that "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." From this language we need not infer that his entire childhood and youth were spent in the desert, for this would have been both unnatural and unnecessary. The most probable supposition is, that for several years he was under the nurture and tuition of his parents, of whom it is recorded, "they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." As the son of a priest he belonged to a class distinguished in that country for their knowledge and intellectual culture, and he would naturally receive the highest educational advantages. Especially would he be thoroughly trained in the doctrines of theology and Biblical literature. His pious father knowing the honorable and exalted station which his son would occupy, doubtless spared no pains to qualify him for his sublime mission. But as his parents were aged at the time of his birth, it

is quite probable that they may have died before he reached the age of thirty years, the period when he formally received his commission from Heaven. The ties of home and kindred being thus sundered, and finding little congenial to his taste and feelings in the society around him, he may at that time have retired to the solitudes of the desert. But it is not material to fix upon the precise day or year, when he went forth into the wilderness to complete his preparation for the great work before him. It is enough for us to know, that amid the mountains and rugged cliffs and dark forests toward the Dead Sea, this wonderful man poured out his soul before God in earnest supplication, meditated upon the infinite perfections of the Deity, and upon the sublime mission of Him, for whose advent he was to prepare the nations. Amid these vast solitudes, the silence of which was only broken by the sighing of the winds, or the rush of the mountain streams, we find the forerunner cultivating that purity of character, simplicity of manners, and energy of purpose, which shone so conspicuously in his public ministry. The very mountains around him seem to impart their grandeur to his soul. The wild winds as they sweep, at night, by his cavern home, seem to tell him of the wilder passions of men, to contend with which, he must gird himself. The flowers that line his pathway are the smiles of a Father, who will watch over him, and care more for him than for the lilies of the valley. The stars at night are so many bright messengers, that come forth to bid him reverence and worship the infinite Creator.

For his food he is content to receive the spontaneous productions of the desert, "locusts and wild honey," which were used by the poorest classes in that region of country. For clothing, instead of the soft raiment of kings, he wore a robe, such as the ancient prophets and poor people were accustomed to wear, made of camel's hair, or of hair and wool mixed, and bound around by a broad leather girdle. Such dresses, we are told, may be every day seen in the Syro-Arabian countries, and somewhat similar ones are used in the interior nations of South Africa.

We need not suppose that this instance of retirement from the world was an isolated one. Josephus informs us that many pious Jews, disheartened in view of the corruption of the people, withdrew to desert places, and devoted themselves to acts of worship, and the religious instruction of any who might resort to them. And in Scripture history, John could trace a long line of illustrious predecessors, whom God had prepared in the wilderness, for important and glorious achievements. Abraham, in whose seed all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, was commanded to leave his home and go forth as a pilgrim to a strange land. In his journeyings, he acquired that moral discipline and strong faith in God, which render his name so illustrious. Moses, after having enjoyed the high advantages and honors of Pharaoh's court, became an exile in the land of Midian, and followed the humble occupation of a shepherd. Far from the attractions and splendors of a royal family, he spent years in the lonely wilderness, in self-discipline, communion with God, and

preparation for the sublime work that was before him. Nor is there a more thrilling history than that of the wanderings of the ancient church under his leadership, for forty years in the wilderness. We almost behold the vast procession moving forward, guided by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night; preserving the ark of the covenant, protected by a divine hand from surrounding idolatry, and educated by the most wonderful displays of omnipotent power ever made to man.

The ancient prophets, too, were familiar with caverns and with the wilds of the desert. Driven, as they often were from the presence of kings, they fled to the mountains, God's great temples, where they bowed in worship, and gathered new strength to assail the prevailing systems of iniquity. Elijah found his home in the desert. The rocks, trees, flowers, and birds, were his companions. He loved to gaze upon the sublime and beautiful scenery that bore the impress of his Father's skill and goodness; loved to listen to the music of gushing fountains and murmuring brooks; loved to feel that inspiration of nature that lifted his soul to nature's God.

The time having arrived for John to enter upon his public ministry, he leaves the solitudes of the desert and draws near to the villages and cities of Judea. His whole appearance is calculated to make a deep impression upon the popular mind. His habits of life; the themes upon which he has long meditated; his frequent communions with the Deity, all qualified him to be an earnest and successful Reformer. He comes forth full of reverence for the

ancient faith, and full of indignation at the hypocrisy and iniquities of the people. He comes imbued with the spirit of the prophets, and fired with a noble enthusiasm to follow in their footsteps, and fulfil his great mission.

The state of the Jewish nation at this period has been often described by writers upon Biblical history. In addition to the corruption of the priesthood, and the formalism into which the true worship of Jehovah had degenerated, the influence of the Roman government was most disastrous upon all the interests of the nation. The marks of the long continued cruelty and despotism of Pontius Pilate were everywhere discernible. The spirit of the Jews was broken, their pride humbled, and their religion treated with contempt. The rites and forms of worship were only tolerated. The Sanhedrim was permitted to retain but little more than the show of authority. The office of the high-priest was at the disposal of the Roman governor, and the most sacred usages of the church were subject to Pagan interference. Different sects were embittered against each other, and every thing was done to fan the flame of jealousy and animosity. Even the idolatrous standards of the Roman empire were unfurled within the walls of Jerusalem, and the presence of foreign soldiers and tax-gatherers constantly reminded the people of their degradation. Exasperated by their oppressors, and swayed by so many conflicting influences, they were ready to embark in the most treasonable plots or be swept along by the wildest forms of fanaticism. Some clung to the hope that a deliverer would ere-

long appear, while others in despair heaped execrations upon the tyrants who enslaved them.

In the midst of this storm of fierce passions and fiery excitements, the herald of the Messiah appears. His majestic form is seen moving along the banks of the sacred Jordan. The tidings of his approach fly quickly through the land, and multitudes of all classes and sects flock to the river to listen to his message. A strong interest is at once awakened. Curiosity is aroused, and the hearts of the vast assembly are thrilled by the stirring words that fall from the lips of the great Reformer. He stands before them fresh from his school of discipline; dripping with the dews of the wilderness; his garment a type of his rugged and stern nature, his countenance beaming with devotion; his eye kindled by the fire of an intense enthusiasm, and his lips bearing the stamp of a resolution that overawes the multitude. In a voice that seems to come from the depths of eternity, he proclaims that the "kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Among the characteristics of this great Reformer, we are struck, in the first place, *with his boldness ana energy.* He throws himself at once into the midst of the people, and assails, with an unsparing hand, the system of iniquity around him. He rebukes, exhorts, warns the multitude who flock around him, with a fearlessness even greater than that displayed by the prophet Elijah. Opposition, instead of prompting him to flee to the desert, as in the case of that ancient prophet, only urges him forward. Seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his

baptism, instead of feeling honored by their presence, and adapting his instructions to their position and prejudices, he opens upon them with this salutation: "Oh generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" He does not stop to weigh his words, or soften down his epithets, or inquire what effect his utterances will have upon his popularity. Knowing the deep hypocrisy and pretended sanctity of these Pharisees, — perceiving that they were approaching him with no good intentions, or real desires to know the truth, — conscious that their formalism must be broken into, and their corrupt systems demolished, to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord, he denounced them in terms such as the exigencies of the case demanded. He intended that they should feel the force of his words, and be made to realize their true position before God and their fellow men. He calls upon them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. They pretended to repent; but he wishes a genuine work wrought in those who are to become his disciples. He wishes to have sins not only confessed, but forsaken. They prided themselves upon being the chosen people of God, and deemed their Abrahamic descent as the essential requisite to salvation. But the Reformer tells them that God is able from the very stones in the streets to raise up children unto Abraham. If they disgrace by their lives their illustrious ancestor, the kingdom of God will be set up in other hearts, and strangers will come in and reap the benefits that they reject.

To place the matter in the clearest and most forc-

ible light before his hearers, John adds: "And now the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." The time has come for a thorough and radical work to be wrought in the hearts of men. The axe is to be applied not to the branches of the tree, nor to the trunk, but to the very roots. The nation has been long enough incumbered with fruitless, rotten trees. The work of pruning and watering has been carried far enough. The time has come for the axe and the fire to do their work.

This inflexible energy of the forerunner was referred to by the Saviour in his address to the multitude concerning John. "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in king's houses." No pliant, feeble reed, shaken with every breath, did they go out to see, — no luxurious and effeminate parasite, but an earnest, firm, unwavering preacher of God's truth, — a Reformer, whose will was of iron, whose purposes were fixed, whose courage was invincible. He was not indeed destitute of prudence, nor of the spirit of courtesy and kindness. He was neither rash, nor overbearing, nor fanatical. To the people who came to him for instruction he was mild and conciliatory. But forms of iniquity that needed smiting, he did not hesitate to smite. Hypocrites he called by their right names. He did not allow dignity to shield corruptions, nor a solemn profession to divert his attention from a profligate life. He did not allow his conservatism to

freeze up his zeal, nor an excessive prudence to extinguish the fires that the Almighty had kindled in his soul.

Another prominent characteristic of John the Baptist was *his humility*. Although he was related to Christ both officially and by the ties of kindred, yet he arrogated nothing to himself. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to ask him, Who art thou? he confessed, that he was not Christ, neither Elias, nor one of the old prophets. "Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?" "He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." "I am simply a voice — a sound that will be soon borne away upon the passing breeze." The messengers and those who sent them were doubtless ready to acknowledge him in any capacity. But he claims nothing, except to be heard as a preacher of repentance, and as the herald of one who is mightier than himself, whose shoes even, he was not worthy to bear. He was careful, too, that no false impressions should be made by his administering the rite of baptism. He declared, I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. This baptism in the waters of Jordan was simply a type of that spiritual baptism which would be administered by the Messiah, — of that Divine transformation that would purify the soul, elevate the affections, and fit one for the duties and joys of an immortal state.

Soon after, seeing Jesus coming towards him, he

took occasion to turn away the attention of the multitude from himself and direct it towards the Messiah. "Behold," he said, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Behold the great sacrifice which is to be offered up for the redemption of mankind. Listen to his teachings. Follow his guidance. Fasten your affections upon him. The Lamb of God, — pure, spotless, innocent, — provided by infinite love, to save a perishing world! Behold him towards whom, one day, all eyes will be turned, and the affections of all hearts flow! Behold him who will be exalted far above all principalities and powers, and whose praises tens of thousands will sing!"

At another time, when reference was made to Christ's growing fame and to the multitudes that flocked to him, John, in the spirit of the most profound humility, said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Although this herald was more than a prophet; although he held a higher position than that occupied by Abraham, or Moses, or David, or Elijah; although he had acquired great influence with the people and was rapidly gathering followers, and was thus realizing expectations which for years he had entertained, yet he is willing that his personal popularity should decline, that his name even should be forgotten if the name of Jesus is but remembered; willing that the light of the morning star should fade from the heavens, while the Sun of Righteousness is rising upon the world.

Wonderful man! "More than a prophet, indeed!" Full of zeal, courage, energy, and fire, in the prime

and vigor of life, with success attending his efforts, and yet willing to step aside just as soon as the work of preparation is accomplished, willing that the current of his influence should flow into the rising tide of the Messiah's fame, and help to swell the mighty stream of his power; this is humility that is worthy of the name! We had rather call it glory. We had rather call it the highest heroism to which human nature can attain.

# II.

## SONG OF THE ANGELS.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." — Luke ii. 13, 14.

"Are there no clarions upon earth,
To tell mankind their monarch's birth?
Are there no banners to unfold,
Heavy with purple and with gold?
Are there no flowers to strew the ground,
Nor arches with the palm-branch bound?
Nor fires to kindle on the hill?
No! man is mute — the world is still,
Ill would all earthly pomp agree
With this hour's mild solemnity;
The tidings which that infant brings,
Are not for conquerors, nor for kings;
But to the contrite and the meek,
The simple, sorrowful, and weak;
Or those who, with a hope sublime,
Are waiting for the Lord's good time.
Only for those the angels sing,
'All glory to our new-born King,
And peace and good-will unto men;
Hosanna to our God! Amen.'"

Miss Landon.

There is something significant and touching in the fact, that the birth of the Great Shepherd should

first be announced to shepherds who were watching their flocks by night. We may suppose that a peculiar sympathy existed between the Saviour and those who were engaged in this humble though honorable employment. The care which they exercised over their flocks; their affection for the sheep; their readiness to protect the fold by day and night against enemies, were all emblematic of the office and duties of the Good Shepherd, who would give his life for his people.

Besides, we must believe that the employment of these pious men peculiarly fitted them to receive, with joy and faith, the good tidings which on that memorable night were communicated to them. The solitudes in which they dwelt, far from the noise and distracting influences of the world, were eminently favorable to frequent seasons of meditation and earnest prayer. They were in constant communion with the beauties and sublimities of nature, which lifted their thoughts and affections to the Supreme Architect. In the variegated scenery and abundant fruits of the earth, they recognized the wisdom and goodness of an infinite Benefactor. In the starry heavens they read the glory of the Creator, and they were impressed with his majesty and power.

Participating as they did in the general expectation of a coming Messiah, it is probable that they often gazed at night upon the skies with the hope of beholding some indications of the approach of the Saviour to the earth. Their ideas of his character and mission may have been purer and loftier than those which were generally entertained by the Jews.

It is clear that there were peculiar and important reasons in the divine mind, for selecting from the whole human family this small company of humble men, and making to them such a wonderful communication.

According to the narrative given by St. Luke, the shepherds were startled by an intense and supernatural brightness, which suddenly burst upon them.

On looking up they beheld a form unlike any that they had been familiar with on earth,—a form of surpassing beauty, majesty, and glory. Terrified at the sight, they knew not what to do; nor could they imagine the import of so unusual and dazzling a spectacle. Whether it foreboded mercies or judgments, they could not determine. But in a moment, a voice proceeds from the angelic form, saying, in mild and heavenly accents, "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Of all the announcements ever made to mortal ears by man or angel, this was the most grand and touching. The force of language is exhausted to express the nature of the tidings which the glorious being has come from heaven to communicate. He brings good tidings of great joy to all people; to all who have sensibilities to be touched by a display of infinite love; to all who have faith in a coming Messiah, and whose hearts are prepared to receive the infant Jesus. And to confirm the truth of the announcement, the angel adds, "This shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-

clothes, lying in a manger." The shepherds need not seek him in the palaces of princes, nor in the mansions of the rich. They need not expect to find him wrapped in costly robes and lying upon a golden couch. But the infant form will be found simply wrapped in swaddling-clothes and reposing in a manger; circumstances significant of the poverty and humility of his future career, and of the character of his mission. For to the poor especially his gospel is to be preached, and at the outset he selects a position which renders him most accessible to the masses of the people. The shepherds would scarcely feel at liberty to enter the courts of royalty or the halls of the great, to gaze upon the infant form of the King of kings. But the humblest and poorest can pass the threshold of a stable and gather around a manger. No one would regard himself as an intruder on entering such a place. And in all coming time, the penitent who might fear that his lowly birth would forbid him access to the Lord of glory, would have his fears quickly dissipated by the remembrance of the Saviour's birthplace, and of the fact that during his life he had not where to lay his head.

But scarcely had the sign been received, when there broke from the skies a splendid vision and a full chorus, that filled the shepherds with wonder and delight. "Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

A more beautiful, appropriate, and comprehensive anthem than this cannot be conceived. In the few-

est possible words we find expressed the honor due to the highest authority in the universe; the loyalty of the angelic hosts; and the profound interest that is felt above in the welfare of mankind. It is fit that the first and warmest ascriptions of praise be given to God, the fountain of all blessings, and the author of this divine and glorious scheme of redemption. And had mankind realized the true and full import of this anthem, they would have echoed back its strains, and from every hill-top and valley and plain, there would have gone up one universal shout of praise. The very rocks and hills would have broken forth into singing, and all the trees of the field would have clapped their hands. But the mass of mankind are too deeply immersed in the cares, business, and frivolities of life, to heed these indications of the Messiah's advent. It is left for the angelic hosts to celebrate this event. Their holiness, intelligence, appreciation of the love of God and the worth of the human soul, qualify them to shout with the warmest enthusiasm, "Glory to God in the highest." They feel that the loftiest praises are due to Jehovah for his condescension in giving his only and well beloved Son to die for this sinful race. The mysteries of the atonement they desire to look into, but they cannot explore the depths of the mighty scheme. Yet they see and comprehend enough to convince them, that of all the displays of divine love which they have ever witnessed, this is the greatest; of all the manifestations of the divine glory, this is the brightest; of all the themes of stirring song and rapturous praise, this is the mightiest and most en-

during. They see in this birth, the germ of a vast movement that will embrace the world as its field, and require ages for its development.

They perceive, too, the bearings of this scheme upon the divine administration, in its development of the great principle that the Sovereign of the universe can be just, and yet the justifier of them that believe. Heretofore the penalty of a violated law had cast its dark and awful shadow over the human race. But now the horizon is skirted with the light of mercy. The Sun of Righteousness is rising upon the world with healing in his beams. The dignity and authority of the divine administration can be sustained, and at the same time there is pardon for the penitent, and favor for the believing. To see thus a way of escape provided, while every principle of holiness and justice is maintained, — to see divine wisdom and love defeating the designs of the great adversary, and arresting the fearful consequences of sin, and throwing open the gates of heaven to the subjects of redeeming grace, excites the warmest admiration of the celestial intelligences. They shout "Glory to God," knowing that such a scheme is deserving of the highest praises, and that it will yield to the Deity through eternity, a revenue of the highest honors.

In this wonderful song we also hear the words, "*peace on earth.*" The angels knew that they were celebrating the advent of the Prince of Peace, — of one who would hush the voice of human strife, quell the angry passions of men, and teach the nations to beat their swords into ploughshares, and their

spears into pruning-hooks, and learn war no more. They knew the character of the Messiah, his mild and gentle spirit, the depth of his love, the extent of his compassion, for they had through long ages experienced his kindness, and witnessed the displays of his divine and glorious attributes. They were convinced that his simple presence on the earth would shed abroad a peaceful and holy influence; that the sweet accents of his voice would fall like music upon the perverse nature of man, and that the power of his example would calm the troubled waters of hatred and contention.

Could we have mingled with these pious shepherds, and have heard from the skies those precious words, "peace on earth," with what joy should we have welcomed them to our hearts? Peace to the troubled conscience — peace to the oppressed and sorrowing spirit — peace such as the world can neither give nor take away! But though this privilege was not granted to us, yet we find consolation in the assurance, that

"There is an hour of peaceful rest,
To mourning wanderers given;
There is a tear for souls distressed,
A balm for every wounded breast—
'Tis found alone — in heaven.

"There is a home for weary souls,
By sin and sorrow riven:
When tossed of life's tempestuous shoals,
Where storms arise and ocean rolls,
And all is drear — but heaven."

It is worthy of remark, that at the time this an-

gelic song was heard, peace reigned throughout the Roman empire. God had so ordered the events of his providence as to secure a cessation of hostilities between different nations, and thus so far prepare the way for the Messiah's advent. The temple of Janus was shut, indicating the universal prevalence of peace, an event which had occurred but twice before during the seven centuries of the existence of the Roman empire. When we consider the vast extent of this empire, the various elements of which it was composed, the warlike character of the people, and the feelings with which they were regarded by foreign nations, it seems almost miraculous that peace should prevail at that period. Hostilities are suspended, as though to welcome the Prince of Peace. The involuntary homage of millions is thus rendered to the Messiah. The noise of battle is hushed, that angelic songs may be heard. Peace reigns as a beautiful symbol of the moral state of the world, when the fruits of Christ's mission shall have been fully experienced, and his blessed principles shall have triumphed over every evil passion.

But there is another expression in this chorus, that must have afforded the shepherds the most intense delight. Mingling with the music, of the sweetness of which we can form no conception, they hear the words "*good-will toward men.*" Good-will from the Father and from the Son and from the Holy Ghost, towards even ungrateful and sinful man! Good-will in the hearts of angelic hosts; of the myriads of bright and holy beings that surround the eternal throne! In this sentiment we have embodied the great prin-

ciple that pervades the social and moral life of heaven; and is the very essence of Deity. It is the principle to which the nature of all sentient beings is adapted, and conformity to which secures the highest possible happiness. It does not reign upon this earth, because its antagonist, selfishness, has the throne of human hearts. But it is a source of infinite satisfaction to know, that there is a world where benevolence does reign triumphant, — where the highest happiness is derived from promoting the happiness of others. And this interest which angels feel in the welfare of the human family, can flow from no other fountain than that of a purely benevolent nature. It is because they delight in the happiness of all sentient beings, that they are so deeply interested in man. Even human apostasy and degradation, — even the vices of men that naturally repel all holy beings, do not throw us beyond the pale of their sympathies. They perceive in man, though he is in ruins, a value that cannot be estimated; capabilities for enjoyment which cannot be measured; and sources from which may spring vast revenues of glory to the Deity. Hence in all their communications with earth, they manifest a kindness of feeling and depth of interest which cannot be expressed. When our world first floated in space, fresh and beautiful from the hands of its Creator, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." They rejoiced in the new manifestation of the Divine goodness and power. And they have ever been ready to minister to the wants and alleviate the sorrows of the human family. "Are they not all ministering spirits,

sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Had we organs of vision which would enable us to behold these resplendent and holy beings, we should see them at their several posts engaged in missions of love. We should see one presiding over the affairs of a nation — another protecting the interests and promoting the spirituality of a church — another comforting the afflicted — another standing at the bedside of the dying Christian, and ready to accompany his spirit to the regions of glory. We should see a vast multitude whose hearts beat in sympathy with every human interest. We are indeed assured that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." The return of a single wanderer thrills their souls with delight. For they know the worth of one immortal spirit. They know what heights of honor and felicity it is capable of reaching, and into what depths of wretchedness it is liable to be plunged. And bending from the lofty battlements of the eternal city, they watch with the deepest solicitude for any indications of penitence and faith among the guilty children of men.

Such a manifestation of interest from such pure and exalted intelligences ought to have an elevating influence upon every human heart. It exalts us in the scale of being to know that such an intense and wide spread sympathy is felt for man in the far distant regions of the universe, — that the highest and holiest intelligences bring the welcome tidings of their good-will towards the human family.

The good shepherds having listened to the last

strains of this wonderful song, at once left their flocks, and hasten to find the new-born infant. Following the direction given to them by the angel, they went to Bethlehem, "and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger." Being forcibly struck with the fulfilment of the announcement which they had heard, they made known to all around them the facts respecting the remarkable and splendid vision which they had seen during the night.

And they "returned glorifying and praising God." Their faith in the Messiah was confirmed; their hearts were filled with gratitude, and they were ready, with the warmest enthusiasm, to join the angelic hosts in the song "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good-will toward men."

# III.

## VISIT OF THE WISE MEN.

'BEHOLD, THERE CAME WISE MEN FROM THE EAST TO JERUSALEM, SAYING, WHERE IS HE THAT IS BORN KING OF THE JEWS? FOR WE HAVE SEEN HIS STAR IN THE EAST AND ARE COME TO WORSHIP HIM." — St. Matthew ii. 1, 2.

"Far in the desert East it shone,
A guiding star, and only one;
The other planets left the sky,
Trembling, as if rebuked on high.
The moon forsook its silvery height,
Abashed before that holier light;
The storm clouds that on ether lay
Melted before its glorious ray;
Till half the heaven shone pure and clear,
Like some diviner atmosphere
Than ours, where heavy vapors rise
From the vile earth to dim the skies;
Meet herald of that promised day,
When souls shall burst the bond of clay,
And, purified from earth stains, come,
Radiant to its eternal home."

THE birth of Jesus was an event which attracted the angels of heaven and the wise men of the earth. Holiness and wisdom both had their representatives on this interesting occasion. Though the Saviour

was born in a manger, and under the most humble circumstances, — though his advent was greeted by no public demonstration of gratitude or honor, yet there were not wanting indications of his royalty, and the marks of reverence due to so illustrious a personage. A bright star or meteor pointed out the sacred spot where he was born. A company of pilgrims, distinguished for their piety and wisdom, come from the far East and seek diligently for the young child. They bring with them precious gifts to lay at the feet of the infant Messiah, as the testimonials of their affection and homage. Guided by the light of the star, and aided by a Divine illumination from above, they find the object of their search, and render to him the worship due to his character and mission. By prostrating themselves before him, they recognize the divinity of his nature, and the grandeur of the object which has called him from heaven to earth. They recognize in that infant breast a power slumbering that will one day be felt among the nations of the earth. They recognize a great moral force that will change the face of society, and elevate man from the regions of darkness and degradation into those of light, truth, and happiness. In connection with their worship they present the rich products of their country, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, — a very timely offering to aid the parents of Jesus in making their flight into Egypt. This scene presents several interesting points of inquiry and meditation.

In the first place we desire to know who these wise men were, and from what country they came. In the Greek language they are called *μάγοι*, and in

the Latin *magi*, a title given to them on account of their eminence in learning, and especially their knowledge of nature, and of the movements of the heavenly bodies. The name also was applied to such as were skilled in political matters. "For," says an able writer, "the great counsellors of the Persian kings were called magi, and Cicero affirms that none were ever admitted to the Persian throne, but such as had been thoroughly instructed and trained up by these magi. The title was also sometimes used by those who practised wicked arts, but in its proper and usual meaning, it designates those philosophers who were skilled in natural, political, or moral science."

Some writers suppose that they were kings from some eastern nations, and that their mission was a fulfilment of the prophecy. "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts." But there are no substantial grounds for this opinion; for Herod did not treat them as kings, but gave to them commands to diligently search for the young child and bring him word again, as though they were properly subject to his authority. Besides, had they been persons of royal rank, the fact would doubtless have been mentioned by the Evangelists. But they were obviously Gentile philosophers, who, in addition to their learning, enjoyed special Divine influences, and were anxious to obtain an accurate knowledge of the true God. Though they did not come under the promises which had been made to Abraham and his seed, yet it is reasonable to suppose that they had

been expecting and waiting for a Messiah — a Messiah who should break down the partition wall between Jews and Gentiles — who should extend to all nations the blessings of his mission, and recognize as his friends all who would believe on his name. That they had faith in a coming Saviour, is evident from their searching so diligently for the young child. That they were under the divine protection and guidance, is evident from the appearance of the beautiful star that directed their footsteps. Their religious faith was evinced by their readiness to fall down and worship the Saviour. We may regard them as the representation of that portion of the Gentile world upon whom some rays of divine light had shone, and who were anxious to receive a teacher sent from God. There was a significancy in such a visit to Christ, so early in his history. It indicated that the reign of a formal system of religion, and one that conferred special privileges upon a few classes, was drawing to a close; that a new and spiritual empire was about to arise in the earth; that mankind were to be moved forward by the agency of a new and mighty moral force, towards a high state of civilization and religion.

But we are interested to know whence these sages came upon so remarkable a mission. As to the precise country from which they came, eminent divines are not fully agreed, as the Evangelist simply mentions that they came from the East. Some are of the opinion that they came from Persia, others that they journeyed from Arabia, and others still, that they came from Assyria. The arguments in favor

of the first opinion are, that this class of philosophers abounded in Persia; that the country was situated eastward to Judea, which corresponded with the words of the Evangelist, and that the manner of approaching Jesus with presents and such marks of homage, was in accordance with the custom in Persia, when persons appeared in the presence of kings. The argument in favor of Arabia, is that gold, frankincense, and myrrh, abound in that country. There are also other circumstances upon which the opinion with reference to this country, is based. If the wise men came from Arabia, they must have encountered many hardships and dangers in their journey: for their course would lay through a wild and parched desert, which was infested by bands of robbers and murderers. But from whatever country they originated, they manifested a degree of piety and zeal that is worthy of our admiration. They were bent upon finding Jesus, whom they already hailed as born King of the Jews. They did not come to inquire whether his birth had taken place, for they had satisfactory knowledge upon that point. They had seen "his star," and with their hearts full of faith, they had come to worship.

The connection of Herod with this scene is too intimate to be passed unnoticed. This most wicked of wicked men endeavored to turn this pious mission into a means for effecting the destruction of the infant Jesus. With a degree of hypocrisy and malice which only the vilest and most infamous of men are capable of reaching, he pretended that he desired to know where the young child was, that he might

also come and worship him. Besides being like all base usurpers and tyrants, full of suspicions and jealousies, his anxiety was greatly increased by the intelligence that had reached him respecting the star, and by the rumors which were abroad that about that time a prince was to be born who would rule over Israel. His character presents a striking contrast to those wise and good men whom he wished to employ as instruments for accomplishing his cruel designs. Before the birth of Christ, he had stained his administration with almost every imaginable crime. All who were suspected of having any claims or desires for his crown, were basely assassinated. Every principle of honor, right, and justice was sacrificed. The most sacred and tender ties were disregarded. Not content with murdering his predecessor in the extremity of his old age, he carried the sword into his own family, and put to death one of his wives and his own children, and to carry his remorseless cruelty to the highest pitch, he issued an edict requiring the indiscriminate slaughter of all "the children in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof," hoping thus to accomplish the murder of the infant Jesus. His wickedness and villany were so stupendous that neither the innocency of childhood, nor the reverence due to old age, nor the affection of a wife, nor the obligations of the parental relation, afforded any protection against him. He is styled Herod the Great on account of the splendor of the palaces which he built, and the magnificence of his reign. But the greatness of his wickedness surpassed all other manifestations of greatness. The

dark, colossal monuments reared by his atrocious cruelty, rose higher and stood out more conspicuous than the temple and palaces that he erected.

Accustomed to be implicitly obeyed, when he found that he was mocked or deluded by the wise men, he was exceedingly enraged, and sent forth that terrible command that caused in Rama, "lamentation and weeping, and great mourning: Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted because they are not." Under the reign of such a prince was the Saviour born, — a prince whose power was based upon injustice, whose throne was covered with blood, and whose administration was marked by every form of cruelty. On the one hand was the innocent babe of Bethlehem; on the other, this remorseless tyrant thirsting for his blood. In the same country heaven and hell meet through their representatives. They meet as antagonistic forces, destined to struggle one against the other. The principles of the two worlds are strikingly set forth in the two characters. One is all benevolence, and the other is unmixed selfishness. One has a heart full of tenderness and mercy, the other has the spirit of a fiend. One is erelong to give his life for the benefit of the human family, the other sacrifices human life to attain his own base ends.

Why so infamous a king was permitted to live and to rule over the Jews at so interesting a period in their history, is a question which finite wisdom cannot answer. Not until the great problem of moral evil is solved, can this point be settled. Viewed in the light of the world's uniform wickedness, it is

not so wonderful that the benevolent career of the Saviour should have commenced with a Herod, and ended with a Judas. For had Christ appeared in any age or nation, he would have encountered men of a similar character and similar principles with these. If he comes to oppose wickedness, to smite the gigantic forms of iniquity that prevail, he must meet the representatives of these forms and systems, from the day of his birth to the day of his death. But if Christ had bitter enemies, he also had sincere and warm friends. If the cruel tyrant sought him in order to take his life, the wise men from the East desired to present to him gifts, and to render to him the homage of grateful and believing hearts.

Let us next notice the impression made upon the minds of the pious sages by their visit to the infant Saviour. As they were guided by the star that led them to the spot where the young child was, the Evangelist tells us that "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." In the original Greek, the words express a fulness and excess of joy which it is difficult to translate in our language. The intensity of their joyful emotions indicated the earnestness of their desires to see Jesus, and their strong faith in him. They did not come to show merely their outward respect at the birth of so illustrious a personage, nor to render to him a mere formal worship. Their feelings were strongly enlisted in the object of their search. They were men who were sincere and earnest inquirers after the truth, — men of learning, of high intellectual culture, — men who were familiar with the Jewish Scriptures, and with the prophecies concerning a com-

ing Messiah. They rejoiced in the successful termination of their journey, and in the goodness of God which permitted them to behold the long promised Messiah. As the children of Israel were guided in their night journeyings by a pillar of fire to the promised land, so their footsteps had been guided by the light of a beautiful star or meteor, to the birthplace of the Messiah. And like the devout Simeon they might have said: "Lord, now let thy servants depart in peace, for our eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." They rejoiced that their faith was so much strengthened by what they saw. Probably they had before clung to their belief amid many doubts and discouragements. In their own country, where their religious opinions were known, they may have encountered opposition or ridicule on account of their peculiar views. Their journey to Bethlehem under the guidance of a new star, may have been regarded as a fanatical and visionary enterprise. Although they were men of learning, rank, and influence, and were admitted to the palaces of kings, and consulted on all important occasions, yet their eminent position may have exposed them to great temptations, and strong resolution may have been required on their part to maintain their belief. But now they find their steadfastness and zeal abundantly rewarded by the view which is granted to them of the Messiah. They find that their confidence was not misplaced, and they rejoice that their faith has reached so triumphant an issue.

It was also a source of joy to them that a glorious Prince of the Jews was born, one who would confer great and lasting blessings upon the nations of the earth. How definite and clear were their ideas of the nature of Christ's kingdom, and the character of his reign, we have no means of determining. It is hardly probable that God would have, in so remarkable a manner, guided them to Bethlehem, simply that they might pay a transient tribute of respect to Jesus. They may have known that the object of their worship had come to work out the redemption of our race, — to give his life a ransom for many. They may have recognized in him a divine Saviour, and a ruler who would confer great spiritual as well as temporal blessings. While standing in the house by the side of Mary, and bending over the infant form of Jesus, they may have recalled the prophetic words of Isaiah, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace." And their conceptions of the splendor of his reign, and the glories of his mission, may have been a prominent source of their exceeding joy. The divine being who had revealed to them the birth of Christ, could easily have imparted to them clear views of his career, and the blessed results of his life and of his death. Especially they may have seen that the Gentile world would share largely in the benefits of his advent, and hence they would naturally be filled with joy. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that these sages, in their own country, pre-

pared the way for the triumph of divine truth. If their faith was at first so strong as to lead them to take a long journey, and bring with them costly gifts to present to the new-born king, how much must both their faith and zeal have been quickened by what they had seen and heard. They may have returned to their own country as missionaries of the new religion, and subsequently have had their minds more thoroughly enlightened in regard to "the truth as it is in Jesus." Indeed, an early antiquity informs us that messages or letters were afterwards sent to Jesus from Abgarus, king of Edessa, in Arabia, containing expressions of the highest respect for his character and mission, — letters which may have had their origin in the information at first communicated by these sages.

We may also regard this visit of the wise men, as a beautiful and striking emblem of that happy period in the history of the church, when, in the words of Isaiah, "the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising;" when "the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee;" when "all they from Sheba shall come, and bring gold and incense, and shall show forth the praises of the Lord." It was peculiarly fit that the future triumphs of the Gospel among the Gentile nations, should thus be represented in the early history of the Messiah. For if Christ was to be despised and rejected by the Jews, it was a consolation to his parents and friends to receive some tokens of his success among a portion, at least, of the human family. Thus while we look upon Herod as a representative of the cru-

elty and treachery that Christ would meet with at the hands of his people, we delight to turn our eyes towards these wise men, as the representatives of those nations that would one day come to Jesus to worship, and pour their gold and silver into the treasury of the Lord. And what was shadowed forth in this visit, we find has been fully realized. For the light of Christ's holy mission soon poured over the walls of Jerusalem, travelled beyond the confines of Judea, and reached the millions that for long ages had been sitting in darkness. The trumpet voice of the prophet was heard, saying to them, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon thee." At this day we have the spectacle presented to us of Judea, once the holy land, lying waste and barren, its cities demolished, or in the hands of infidels, while over Gentile nations there rise thousands of Christian churches, from which go forth influences and agencies that are blessing the world. On this continent, at that time an unknown wilderness, there has in these modern days grown up a Christian power, which we believe will not wane, until the Gospel is preached to every creature. The stone which the Jewish builders rejected, has become the corner-stone of our modern Christendom. "This is the Lord's doings: it is marvellous in our eyes."

The manner in which the wise men were enabled to render their visit a beautiful emblem of such glorious results, and were saved from being even the innocent instruments of executing the cruel purpose of Herod, is worthy of a moment's notice. After having worshipped the new-born king and left their

treasures, we are told, that, "being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country, another way." Had it not been for this divine communication, they might have had the grievous reflection of having been the indirect occasion of the death of the holy child. But the same God in whom they put their trust when they entered upon their journey, was with them in every extremity. He directed their steps, warned them of danger, and kept them from being the instruments of the tyrant's cruelty. They returned to their own country, carrying with them richer treasures than those which they brought, and rejoicing that by the aid of divine power, they had been saved from the snare which was laid to entrap them.

This scene teaches us lessons of practical importance. All wise men in every age of the world will seek Christ. They will seek not only the evidences of his birth, but will examine his system of doctrines, his scheme of redemption, his claims upon our homage and worship. They will follow the guidance of the star of hope that appears in the moral firmament, — a star that to the believing will increase in brightness, and one day become a sun, filling the heavens with its splendor and glory. They will bring gifts worthy of the Saviour's acceptance, — the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, their cordial love, and the services of their lives. They will experience the joy which the sages felt. Every new interview with the Saviour will increase their delight. They will join the Psalmist in his prophetic and sublime words, "He shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold

of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised. His name shall endure forever, and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed."

# IV.

## TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS.

"THEN WAS JESUS LED OF THE SPIRIT INTO THE WILDERNESS TO BE TEMPTED OF THE DEVIL."—Matthew iv. 1.

THE period which elapsed between the childhood of Jesus and his public ministry, was employed by him in making preparation for his great work. Uniting as he did a human with a divine nature, his human nature was subject to those laws of culture and discipline which belong to our race. We are informed that in his youth he "increased in wisdom, and in favor with God and man." His natural faculties were developed and expanded as he advanced in years, and were thus fitted to become the organs of his divine nature. As the human body in its growth and progress towards maturity, becomes a vehicle through which the mind acts and expresses its emotions and thoughts, so the human soul of Christ, by development and culture, was prepared to become the medium through which his divine nature might express its thoughts and make its revelation to the world.

Of the early history of Jesus we know but little. A single incident is recorded which strikingly illus-

trates his progress in knowledge, and his consciousness of the divine nature within him. When about twelve years of age, his parents, on making their annual visit to Jerusalem, at the time of the Passover, took him with them. On their return they missed him, and after searching, he was found in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, and discussing with them, much to their wonder and admiration, questions of religious faith. Doubtless his mind was greatly quickened by what he saw and heard at Jerusalem and in the temple; and probably on this occasion, for the first time, the divine light burst forth from his intellect, and the infinite treasures of his wisdom were unfolded to human view. The learned doctors were amazed at the penetration, clearness, skill, and power of argument manifested by a youth at so tender an age. But though surprised, they were not aware that what they beheld was the opening fountain of that mighty stream of thought, which was destined to purify the spiritual life of man, and flow on in its fertilizing course through all coming ages.

The early preparation of Christ for his public ministry and achievements, included discipline as well as culture; and that kind of discipline which results from conflicts with temptation. Whether it is an indispensable condition of moral discipline and moral rectitude, that evil or temptation, in some of their forms, must be met and resisted, is a question which we need not stop to discuss. It is sufficient to our present purpose to know that Christ was tempted, and in this fact, we find the necessity of the temptation.

From the narrative we learn that Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, where he had received the solemn rite of baptism, and was immediately led by the spirit into the wilderness, to meet there the great tempter, and decide with him the question of supremacy and victory. Whether the account which the Evangelists have furnished is to be taken literally in all its features, or has, in some respects, a symbolical import, we are not prepared to decide. The principles, however, involved in the case, are the same, whether we regard it literally or symbolically.

It appears from the account that there were three distinct temptations, that appealed severally to Christ's necessities; to the feeling of presumption, and that of ambition.

With the first he was assailed after having fasted forty days and forty nights. Being filled with the Holy Spirit, and in the retirement of the wilderness, far from the distracting influences of the world, he was so absorbed by his meditations upon the greatness and glories of the work that was before him, that he was not conscious for a considerable period of the lapse of time, or of his need of food. Instances of a similar character have occurred in the history of persons eminent for their intellectual vigor and glowing piety. Moses, in the solitude of the mount, before receiving the law from Jehovah, fasted forty days, to prepare his mind for the stupendous scenes that were to open before him. Elijah, the chief of the prophets, fasted the same period; — and now he who combined in his own person, lawgiver, prophet, and redeemer,

the author of a new covenant and founder of a new dispensation, spends the same time in fasting, humiliation, and prayer. While in a state of exhaustion from such long continued abstinence, the tempter approached him in a visible form, as one who desired to witness the evidences of his sincerity and divinity. The skill and subtlety of Satan were manifested not only in his selection of such a time in which to present the temptation, but in assuming the character of one who was an inquirer after truth. "If thou art the Son of God," that extraordinary person who has been long expected, then "command that these stones be made bread," and thus at once satisfy your hunger. But Jesus replied, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." This quotation is made from Deuteronomy viii. 3, wherein reference is made to the manner in which God sustained the Israelites in the wilderness. They were not supported by the bread and flesh of the Egyptians, but by manna sent directly from heaven; and the idea which Christ intends to convey is, that the same God can sustain him in the wilderness without bread. Into that wilderness he had been led by the Holy Spirit, and he prefers to continue under his guidance and care, rather than distrust Providence and perform a miracle to satisfy his necessities. His supreme desire was to know and to follow the divine will, and he is confident that God will bring to him relief in his own time and way. On other occasions we find the same unwillingness, on the part of Christ, to perform miracles for his own personal benefit. When he

was betrayed, and was surrounded by the soldiers and the mob who were anxious to seize him, he said: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" And when he had been nailed to the cross, the priests and scribes, as they passed by, said: "He saved others: himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." But neither to save himself from suffering, nor to gratify curiosity, nor, above all, to meet the wishes of the arch deceiver would Christ exert his miraculous power.

Besides, in every position that he occupied, he stood as an example to mankind. It was a part of his mission to be tempted "like as we are, yet without sin." He came to struggle in a human form against the great adversary, — to demonstrate that evil could be resisted, and the devil triumphed over in every conflict. It is true that he had not a sinful nature for temptation to fasten itself upon; but he had human sensibilities and wants, and was so tried as to be able to sympathize with man in all the varied circumstances and sorrows of life. Had he, in the wilderness, exerted his miraculous power, and converted the stones at his feet into bread, and thus satisfied the cravings of hunger; or had he, when arrested, summoned legions of angels to his aid, and destroyed his enemies, important ends in his mission would have remained unaccomplished. Man needed a Saviour not only with divine powers, but with human sympathies; one who could feel in his own soul the force of human weakness and dependence;

one who could combine the authority and omnipotence and glory of a God, with the endurance, virtues, and submission of a perfect man. How else can Christ be our example? How else can we follow in his footsteps? In these various walks of life, amid these temptations that beset us, in conflicts with the great adversary, how can we follow one who has only a divine nature; who by the breath of his power can slay every foe, and thus has infinite advantages over us in every respect. When Christ wrought miracles, it was to attest his divinity and to serve and benefit others. But when he suffered and struggled with temptation, it was in his human capacity. St. Peter says: "Christ suffered for us, leaving for us an example that ye should follow his steps Who knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committeth himself to him that judgeth righteously."

In the reply which Christ made to the tempter there is also a significancy that is worthy of our remembrance: "Man shall not live by bread alone." As though he had said, bread or food is not the only nourishment that man needs. He has a higher life than that of the body, to be fed. He has nobler aspirations to meet, purer and loftier ends to attain, than those which terminate in bodily comfort! He has a mind to discipline, powers to invigorate, virtues to strengthen, a soul to be fitted for solemn duties and weighty responsibilities. His proper food is the Word of God — divine truth — that spiritual nourishment that descends like manna from heaven. To

this Christ referred when he said on one occasion to his disciples: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." When conversing with the woman of Samaria he said: "Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst;" but it shall be "in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Should not all seek that water and food that will give real life, everlasting life! In God's Holy Word, we have spread out a celestial banquet,—food for the soul,—food that will nourish us for immortality.

Being defeated in this attempt, the tempter very artfully assails the Saviour at another point, and endeavors to lead him into an act of presumption. Taking him to Jerusalem, and placing him on a pinnacle of the temple, he said unto him: "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." The word pinnacle, though it agrees well with the original Greek, yet is liable to convey to the English reader a wrong idea. The roof of the temple was flat, and was surrounded with a battlement, a part of which was very high. Upon the edge probably of the loftiest portion, the Saviour stood when the tempter assailed him. In order to present the temptation in the strongest possible manner, Satan assures him, on Scriptural authority, that there will be perfect safety in his making this demonstration of his miraculous power. But Christ, seeing at once through the cunning of the adversary, replied: It is also written, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." He felt that it would

be gross presumption to attempt to call into requisition the omnipotence of Jehovah, when the danger could be avoided by descending from the battlement in the usual manner. His words teach us the great lesson, that we are to expect divine aid only when we make a diligent use of the means that are in our power. If we are found out of the path of duty, or rush presumptuously into peril, or unnecessarily expose ourselves to dangers, we need not expect that omnipotence will interfere for our protection. God has instituted certain laws for the government of our health, safety, usefulness, advancement in piety; and if these laws are violated, we cannot expect the Deity to go out of his course, or throw the system upon which he governs the universe into disorder, merely that we may be saved from the consequences of our imprudence. Should he do this in one case, he must in another, and in a third and fourth, and thus there would soon be an end to all order and government.

If a person of a zealous temperament and of ardent piety, in the prosecution of even a good work, exposes his health or person to dangers, he has no right to expect a special act of divine assistance to meet an exigency that may be met by the employment of the ordinary means of protection and safety. The young disciple, whose ardor prompts him to make the most thorough mental preparation for the gospel ministry, or the devoted missionary who goes forth to convert savage tribes to the principles of the gospel, are not exempt from the great laws which the Deity has instituted for our safety and government. It is true, that if, in the clear path of duty, they meet with

dangers, they have a right to ask and expect divine assistance; and, indeed, upon the ordinary means of safety, we should at all times seek the divine blessing. I fully believe in what are termed special providences in cases where human means fail. The Israelites in the wilderness experienced them. The Old Testament saints, Elijah, Shadrach and his associates, Daniel and others, were the favored subjects of divine interposition and aid. And in our day, there is too little exercise of strong confidence in God, — too little boldness in his service based upon reliance on his aid. But what the example of Christ teaches under this temptation is, that we must associate prudence and forethought with our piety; that we must not mistake presumption for zeal, nor rashness for confidence in God. And we see the distinction for which we contend clearly illustrated in the whole career of the Saviour. No one will charge Christ with a want of zeal, boldness, and earnestness in the prosecution of his great work. And yet his whole life was marked with the greatest prudence and discretion. He never voluntarily exposed himself to peril, and always used the wisest means to escape the stratagems of his enemies. And by pursuing this course, he was enabled to accomplish the greatest amount of usefulness, and to set before mankind a perfect example. As the two gases that compose the atmosphere are so united as to secure the greatest amount of life and vigorous health, so in Christ these two classes of virtues were so united as to secure the most healthy action and the accomplishment of the highest good.

Let the church of Christ unite these two elements of strength, and she would not only grow with an inward spirituality, but she would be mighty through God to the pulling down of the strong-holds of sin. We should see her embattled hosts marching forth, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. The church would obtain conquests by an earnest, progressive spirit, and retain the advantages gained by a sound and healthy conservatism. We should neither be afflicted by a dead formalism on the one hand, nor by a rash, headstrong zeal on the other. As in the physical universe the two forces, the centripetal and centrifugal, the one drawing the planets toward the sun, and the other drawing them from it, secure the regular and harmonious action of these bodies around the central orb, so these two moral forces in combination, would keep the church at the same time in motion and in its orbit around its central head, and bring every part of it within the light and heat of the great Sun of Righteousness.

The tempter, failing in this effort, makes a third attempt, and endeavors to excite in the Saviour the spirit of ambition. He takes him to an exceeding high mountain, and shows to him the kingdoms of the world, and says, "All this power will I give thee and the glory of them, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." If we take this language literally, confining however the word "world," to mean the land of Judea and the surrounding nations, then the mountain described by the Abbé Mariti could have afforded the prospect referred to. Speaking of the

view he says, "Here we enjoyed the most beautiful prospect imaginable. This part of the mountain overlooks the mountains of Arabia, the country of Gilead and of the Amorites, the plains of Moab and Jericho, the river Jordan, and the whole extent of the Dead Sea." If, however, we do not take the language literally, then we may suppose that a vision of the kingdoms of the world, and the splendor and glory of them, passed before the mind of Christ. In either case the object of the temptation is the same, namely, to induce the Messiah to establish an outward and worldly kingdom, which may be purchased with all its splendors, by a single act of worship rendered to Satan. This the tempter urges him to do, rather than attempt to create a spiritual empire that must necessarily be gradually developed, and must advance in the hearts of men, without observation or the aid of external attractions. Thus Satan endeavored to secularize Christ's views of dominion, and induce him to employ his aid in establishing and extending his sovereignty. But the Saviour, indignant at so revolting a proposition, and filled with abhorrence at the idea of worshipping a fallen and created being, said, "Get thee behind me, or get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." This temptation is so full of blasphemy, that the Saviour repels it at once, and in the exercise of his divine authority, commands Satan to leave him. And by resisting it, Christ virtually protests against every endeavor to associate his kingdom with the governments of this world. He establishes the prin-

ciple that his empire is a spiritual one, — that it is to be carried forward by divine influences, and that any mixture of worldly ambition, or evil agencies, is hostile to its progress, and destructive of its pure and noble ends. To this principle he clung with the greatest tenacity through life, even up to the hour when he returned, amid hosts of angels, to the celestial city. And it was the more necessary that he should frequently unfold and insist upon this idea, because of the secular views which were entertained by even his most sincere and devoted followers. It was exceedingly difficult for them to rise to the conception of a purely spiritual empire, — an empire that should advance by the power of motives and moral considerations, — that should obtain conquests over the affections, and should be governed by the great laws of benevolence which reign in the heavenly kingdom. Besides the natural tendency of the mind to worldly and ambitious views, religion had been so long associated with the arm of secular power, that it was more difficult to build up this new idea in the human heart. But it gradually, under the teachings and example of Christ, worked itself into being, and extended from heart to heart, until it became a moral force, the influence of which was widely and deeply felt.

Another reason might be assigned for Christ's resisting this temptation. These very kingdoms of the world would one day come into his possession, though in a far different manner from that which Satan proposes. For the Son of God had the promise that the heathen should be given to him as an

inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. He would gain them by influences brought to bear upon the individual subjects. He would conquer them by the power of love. He would purify, elevate, and sanctify them, and prepare them to be united to his heavenly and everlasting empire. He would also receive the glory of them; a far higher and richer glory than the tempter ever conceived of; the glory of intellectual eminence, lofty virtues, and a religious faith and devotion wrought out by gospel truth.

The temptations passed through, and the tempted conquered and driven from the field, the scene closes by the sudden appearance of holy angels, who come to minister to the Lord of glory. From their lofty seats above they have watched the conflicts through which the Saviour has passed. They have witnessed his glorious victories, and now they hasten with delight to his relief.

Thus disciplined and fortified, Christ is prepared to enter upon his public ministry, and accomplish those mighty deeds and glorious achievements that will give him a name that is above every name, — a name before which every knee shall bow, and the authority of which every tongue shall acknowledge.

# V.

## HIS MIGHTY DEEDS.

"Go and show John those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up."—St. Matthew xi. 4, 5.

Much has been written for and against the doctrine of miracles, as taught in both the Old and New Testaments. The enemies of Christianity have been particularly zealous in assailing this article of our faith, and laboring to break down its testimony in favor of the divine origin of the Gospel. Hume, the prince of modern sceptics, taxed his ingenuity, wit, and all the resources of his philosophy, to expel from the court of human reason these witnesses. Others have framed ingenious arguments against the doctrine, and attempted to show that it could not be sustained upon any reasonable grounds. But the doctrine has passed through the severe ordeal of opposition unharmed. Indeed, it has gathered strength from every conflict with its adversaries, and every new investigation has added weight to its authority.

In considering this subject, our first remark is, that

*it is perfectly reasonable that the mission of Christ should be attested by miracles.* If a messenger is sent to us from the eternal throne, or if a system of religion is exhibited to us with claims upon our belief and adoption, it must necessarily be accompanied with such evidences as will convince our judgment. We need in such a case more than ordinary proof. We need that kind and degree of testimony that the importance of the case, and the greatness of the consequences, demand. It is true that we can form some opinion of the character of communications purporting to come from God, from their inherent excellence, and the reputation for honesty and integrity that those enjoy who deliver the messages. But this is not enough to satisfy the mind; nor is it sufficient to place the system upon a solid and permanent basis. For wise men may utter sound maxims and useful sentiments; and persons of unimpeached integrity may advance theories which they believe are founded in truth, and are essential to man's highest welfare. In a matter that affects our spiritual interests, and the immortal destiny of the soul, we require the most clear and positive proof. If we are told that God speaks, we ask for proof that the voice which we hear is divine, before we can receive the communications that are made. And in what way can this proof be furnished, so readily and effectually, as by displays of miraculous power? Let the individual or individuals claiming to give us divine teachings, suspend the laws of nature, or perform deeds that require the exercise of omnipotent power, and they furnish us the highest possible proof of their

sincerity, and of the genuineness of their messages. Now if it was necessary that mankind should receive a divine revelation, — if it was necessary that a teacher sent from God should come to enlighten the ignorant, reclaim the vicious, roll away the moral darkness from the earth, and unfold a spiritual system that would prepare the human family for the solemnities and joys of an eternal state, then it was equally necessary that these communications should be attested by miracles. Indeed, the very idea of a divine revelation, or mission, involves a display of miraculous power. The two are inseparably connected.

The inquiry next arises, *How can the genuineness and credibility of miracles be proved?* I answer, they can be proved like any other phenomena or facts in history, by the testimony of competent and honest witnesses. There are various kinds of evidence employed in the different departments of human knowledge. By the evidence of our senses we judge of the existence of external objects, and the reality of phenomena that pass under our observation. In the sciences, we reason upon mathematical principles; in morals we depend upon moral proof, and for the truth of the facts of history we rely upon human testimony. The authority of these several kinds of evidence in their various departments must be admitted, or nothing can be proved. If the force of human testimony be denied, then we involve the whole past history of mankind in doubt and uncertainty. We swing out upon an ocean of scepticism, exposed to the wild tempests of unbelief,

with no light to guide us to the regions of truth. But if the testimony of competent witnesses be admitted in regard to any facts or phenomena of history, then we claim the same with regard to the miracles of Christ. If it is capable of proof that such a man as Socrates lived and uttered the wise maxims that are ascribed to him, or that Cæsar lived and led forth the Roman armies to conquest, or that Luther wrought out the great Reformation, it is equally capable of proof that Jesus Christ lived and performed the mighty deeds which are ascribed to him. If a sufficient number of honest and competent witnesses are examined, all of whom testify that they saw Christ heal the sick, restore the blind to sight, and raise the dead; and if abundant evidence is furnished that they could not be deceived by false appearances, nor deluded by any spirit of infatuation, then we are bound to admit their testimony, or to give up entirely the basis upon which all such testimony rests.

Admitting, then, the validity of human testimony, let us briefly examine the miracles which Christ is said to have performed.

The character and circumstances of the witnesses were such as to favor the credibility of Christ's miracles. Those who saw these remarkable displays of omnipotent power, and bear testimony to their reality, were men whose honesty and integrity had never been impeached,—whose simplicity of character placed them above the suspicion of attempting to deceive the people, and whose strong common sense and freedom from fanaticism, render it in the

highest degree improbable that they could themselves have been deluded. Besides, they had no motive for giving currency to such events, unless they actually took place; for they were aware how extremely unpopular the cause of Christ was among the Jewish people; and how much it was to their worldly disadvantage to be connected with such a movement. They knew, too, that with the truth on their side, they would be, by many, disbelieved, and by others persecuted for having any confidence in the reality of these miracles. Yet they went forward, everywhere preaching this doctrine, and subjecting themselves to every form of self-denial, in order to induce men to embrace the truth. So fully convinced were they of the Messiahship and divinity of Christ, that they were ready to lay down their lives in defence of their faith. Now the idea cannot be entertained for a moment, that these, or any other men would go through such dangers and sufferings, to establish a system of fraud, when that system could be of no possible benefit to them either in this world or the next. The only advantage that they could derive from their doctrines, must necessarily come from their truth; and if their truth could not be proved and maintained, then they were of all men the most miserable. It is not in accordance with any principles of human nature for men to pursue a course of deception, when that very course is disastrous to all their worldly interests. We must therefore believe that these disciples were honest and sincere in their declarations respecting the miracles which Christ performed. It is also equally clear that

while they did not attempt to deceive others, they were not themselves deceived. They had every opportunity to decide upon the genuineness of these miracles that the nature of the case allowed.

In the first place, they were performed in the most public manner, and without any ostentatious display. Every one had the opportunity of observing them, and of judging of their reality. In the accounts that we have of miracles professedly wrought by Pagans, they have been performed in secret, or under circumstances that prevented the fraud from being easily discovered. The same is true of the pretended miracles of the Papists. But Christ performed his miracles in the most public manner, and in the presence of large and promiscuous crowds of people. In the streets and public squares of Jerusalem, — in the towns and villages of Judea, where great religious festivals were held, — by the seaside, which was much frequented by the people, he healed the sick, cured the lepers, gave hearing to the deaf and sight to the blind. Although the opposition that Christ met with, would have justified him in making his miracles less public, yet he persisted in performing them before the whole people, believers and unbelievers, friends and scoffers, in order that he might disarm prejudice, and demonstrate to all who were susceptible to the power of evidence, that he was the long promised Messiah, the Son of the Most High.

Nor did this publicity partake in the least degree of ostentation or pride. The Saviour performed his miracles with the utmost simplicity and dignity. Many of them were apparently called forth by some

incident or casual circumstance. Oftentimes those who were healed were directed not to speak of what had been done for them; and Christ, after making most wonderful displays of miraculous power, would retire to some secret retreat to avoid any demonstration of feeling that the spectators might be disposed to make. His simple design appears to have been, to allow these mighty deeds to stand upon their own merits, and to produce those convictions upon the minds of men which they were calculated to inspire. He did not need any artificial aids or vain displays to attract attention and interest the public mind. He did not either ordinarily trouble himself to argue the question of the genuineness of his miracles with the captious, the curious, or the unbelieving. After his arrest, and while under examination before the high-priest, he said, "I spake openly to the world: I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort: *and in secret have I done nothing.*" His doctrines, life, and deeds were all open for public inspection. He desired to have them freely and fully investigated, and he wished also to have their design clearly understood. For his purpose was, not to attain any selfish end, not to gratify a personal ambition, but to establish upon a broad and deep basis a great system of moral truth, — a system adapted to the wants and condition of the world, — suited to man's spiritual nature, and capable of satisfying his purest and loftiest desires. This noble purpose was ever before his mind. It guided him as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. And in prosecuting his work,

he performed most of his mighty deeds among the poor, the neglected, and the sorrowing. These classes more than any others brought their sick, lame, and blind to him. He moved among their abodes as an angel of mercy, dispensing with a liberal hand his blessings. So full was he of divine power, that virtue went forth even from the hem of his garment, and healed a woman who simply touched it.

We should also consider, as bearing upon our argument, the number of the miracles which Christ performed. Besides the particular instances recorded, the Evangelists frequently tell us that great multitudes of people were brought to Christ, and that he healed them all. Wherever he went, the fame of his miracles, and of his unparalleled benevolence went before him, and he found the streets lined with the sick, and those who were suffering from various infirmities. St. Matthew says that "Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people." John says, "Many other signs did Jesus which are not written. But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name."

These miracles also embrace the greatest variety. When impostors pretend to work miracles, they usually confine themselves to a few of one or two classes. But the Saviour was ready to exercise his power not only in reference to every disease, but every evil and calamity to which mankind were subject. He gave strength to the infirm, health to the

lepers, vigor to the palsied arm, reason to the insane, and called the dead to life. Four times he performed the great miracle of raising the dead: once upon the ruler's daughter; then on the widow's son, as he was being carried for burial; again on Lazarus, after he had been in the tomb four days; and last, the most glorious instance of all, upon himself. The elements, too, were under his control. By the word of his power he stilled the tempest and calmed the waves of the ocean. He walked abroad as the Lord of nature, — as a monarch possessing supreme authority. And he appeals to his miracles as the evidences of the truth of his system of doctrines and of his divine mission. "The works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." Besides, he received from the Father direct testimony to his sonship and divinity. His birth was a miracle; and, during his life, three times was a voice heard from heaven, declaring him to be the Son of God. In the hour of his crucifixion a supernatural darkness overspread the heavens. The earth was rocked by a heavy earthquake. The rocks were rent asunder; graves were opened; and all nature sympathized with the death of its Lord.

The effects which the miracles of Christ produced upon the popular mind is also a point worthy of notice. Multitudes were led by them to believe on his name. Nicodemus frankly said, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles which thou doest except God be with him." Others, in spite of their early education, strong religious prejudices, and the influence

of friends, were compelled to admit the evidence and believe on Christ. During the first century of Christianity, hundreds of thousands, embracing Jews, Greeks, Romans, and many who had been the violent opposers of the Gospel, adopted the new religion, and became its earnest and eloquent advocates. Yes, thousands who had labored to crush the faith as it is in Jesus, became convinced of their error, and readily sacrificed every worldly advantage to secure an interest in the Saviour of mankind. They encountered the severest opposition, and in many instances submitted to the horrors of a cruel death, rather than deny their Lord.

It is also a significant fact, that in the regions where these miracles were wrought, their reality was not denied, though they were ascribed to other than a divine agency. The Jews on one occasion attributed the miracles of Christ to Beelzebub; and while the Saviour was upon the cross, they declared that he had saved others, and yet could not save himself. Celsus, Porpyhry, Julian, and other enemies of Christianity, were forced by the overwhelming evidences in the case, to admit the reality of the miracles of Christ, but they ascribed them to magic. Their admission, however, shows that the proofs in their favor were irresistible.

Indeed, if we look at the interesting character of the miracles themselves, the circumstances under which they were performed, and the number of honest and truthful spectators who witnessed them, we cannot see how the most bitter enemies of Christianity could deny their reality.

The first miracle which Christ wrought, namely, the turning of water into wine at the marriage feast in Galilee, bears every mark of being genuine. The feeding of five thousand persons in the wilderness, with a few loaves and fishes, was a miracle performed under circumstances that clearly show the impossibility of fraud or deception. So great was the impression made by it upon the minds of the people, and so fully were they convinced of Christ's supernatural power, that they desired at once to make him a king. That such a number of persons, collected in a desert place, far from any village, and with no visible or human means of obtaining a sufficient supply of food, could have been deceived or imposed upon, does not fall within the bounds of possibility. The raising of Lazarus was also a most striking miracle, and one that produced a profound sensation throughout the country.

With such proofs, we cannot doubt the reality and genuineness of our Saviour's miracles. They are before us as the credentials of his Messiahship and divinity, — as the evidences of the truth of his doctrines, and of the justness of his claims to our faith and love. Let them be cordially received, not only to our intellects, but to our hearts, and in eternity we shall behold the more splendid and glorious displays of his infinite power and boundless benevolence.

# VI.

## PURIFICATION OF THE TEMPLE.

"Take these things hence; make not my father's house an house of merchandise." — St. John ii. 16.

We have two accounts of the cleansing of the temple by our Lord, one by St. John which places it at the beginning of Christ's public ministry during his first visit at Jerusalem, and another, given by the other Evangelists, which places it at the close of his labors, after his triumphal entry into the city. Whether both of these narratives refer to the same occasion, or whether there were two instances of purification, similar in their circumstances and results, we shall not attempt to determine. While some take the ground that this event happened but once, and that the reputation of John for chronological accuracy, gives to his statement the most authority, we see nothing unreasonable in the supposition that Christ commenced and closed his ministry, by thus vindicating the purity of the sacred temple. The miracles which Christ performed during the feast, and in the presence of vast multitudes of people, established, as we have seen, his influence and

authority among them. Their views, however, of his true character and the precise nature of his mission, were as yet vague and unsettled. But the impression was very general that a teacher of no ordinary wisdom, and a prophet of no ordinary power, had appeared.

As was natural, the temple, with its interesting associations and holy rites, was an object of the Saviour's highest regard and veneration. He viewed with the deepest sorrow the desecration of its sacred courts, and resolved in the exercise of his authority, to expel the traders who had made his Father's house, a house of merchandise.

The temple in the time of Christ was a most splendid and magnificent structure. Herod, in his fondness for elegant public buildings, and his desire to appease the Jews, had expended upon the rebuilding of the edifice vast sums of money. It is described by Josephus as possessing every quality that was calculated to please the eye, or excite the astonishment of the beholder. Being covered over with plates of gold, it reflected with such intensity the rays of the rising sun, that one could not gaze upon it. At a great distance it had the appearance of a mountain covered with snow; as those parts that were not adorned with gold, were exceedingly white. The stones of which it was composed were of immense size, and the walls and gates were decorated in the most costly and superb manner. Every thing that wealth and art could do, was done to add to the magnificence of the edifice, and render it an object of universal admiration. Although the regard of the

Jews for the temple was such, that they resented the least disrespect or contempt that was manifested towards it, and would in many instances prefer to suffer death rather than see it defiled, yet by a gradual process, disorders had crept into the sacred courts, that excited the Saviour's indignation. To accommodate those who came from a distance to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices, booths had been erected in the court, where they could be supplied with every thing necessary for this purpose. Money-changers were also stationed there to exchange the Roman and Greek coins into Jewish money, for those who were required to pay the half-sheckel tribute to the temple. At first, this trade was carried on with some degree of decorum, but gradually the avarice of the merchants and brokers predominated over every other principle. The sacred court was profaned by the presence of noisy and covetous traders, who greatly disturbed the worship of the temple, and disgusted those who had the spirit of devotion.

Nor can we fail to recognize in this outward and palpable desecration, a picture of the secularization of the whole Jewish theocracy. The spirit of worldliness pervaded the priesthood and the rulers, and entered into the most solemn services of the temple. In the apparent zeal to rigidly fulfil the outward observances of the church, the people lost sight of the great principles of right, justice, and holiness. And, indeed, in all ages of the world we discover this same tendency to secularize the purest forms of religious faith. Man is more ready to drag down the religion to suit his worldly and corrupt desires, than

to allow it to elevate and spiritualize his nature. The religious element being an acknowledged power in society, ambitious and unprincipled men seize it, and employ it to subserve their selfish and base purposes. The ecclesiastical is united with the civil authority, and the combination forms a system of despotism that is destructive to the spiritual interests of society. The history of the Romish church furnishes a fearful illustration of the power for evil, of a secularized religion. Here we see the purest doctrines and holiest aspirations of the soul perverted, and made use of to accomplish the most corrupt ends. The light of divine truth is employed to keep men in darkness. The mercy and pardon offered through the atonement, are used as instruments for obtaining the most complete supremacy over the human soul. Christianity is crushed in the name of Christianity. Human progress is impeded by the only system that can advance the race in intelligence, moral culture, and happiness. A more sad and ruinous perversion cannot be imagined, than the perversion of a pure religious faith for worldly purposes. It is as though men should combine, supposing they had the power, to turn the light of the sun into darkness, or to poison the atmosphere upon which life and health depend. Yet in all ages it has been found that human depravity is equal to the work of perverting the purest and most sacred doctrines. Even in our own day, the advocates of systems of iniquity seek for support in the Holy Scriptures. They claim the divine sanction for forms of evil that violate every principle of justice, and feeling

of humanity. Not content to let the systems rest upon their own merits or demerits, they labor to plant them upon God's truth. They seek to establish wrong upon right, injustice upon integrity, and falsehood upon truth. And had they the power, they would secularize the whole Gospel, and turn every house of worship in Christendom into a house of merchandise.

In the corruptions which had crept into the sacred courts at Jerusalem, doubtless many of the Jews acquiesced. For being themselves under the sway of avarice and a sordid ambition, they were satisfied if the forms of worship and the rites of the Mosaic system were preserved. But as our Lord entered the temple for worship, he was filled with indignation at the spectacle before him. The profanation was so glaring; the worldliness and avarice of the traders presented such a contrast to the holy purposes to which the temple had been consecrated, that the Saviour at once resolved that such abuses should no longer exist. Making therefore a scourge of small cords, which were used to tie the beasts with, he drove out all those who sold sheep and oxen, and overthrew the table of the money-changers: "And said unto them that sold doves, take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise."

We cannot suppose that any force was used by Christ in expelling these traders, for this was contrary to his character and the whole spirit of his mission. Besides, unless a miracle was wrought, of which we have no proof, he might easily have been resisted and

overpowered by the multitudes, whose business and hopes of gain were thus destroyed. We must conclude from the circumstances of the case, that it was by his influence and authority as an acknowledged prophet; by the earnestness and zeal that he manifested, by the indignation that flashed from his eye, and the words of solemn and momentous truth that fell from his lips, that the traders were induced to leave the sacred courts. In addition to this, their consciences were aroused. They knew that they had been guilty of a most gross profanation, and that they had no right to fill the sacred courts with beasts and merchandise. They doubtless looked upon the scourge as the symbol of the divine judgments that would befall them if they persisted in their wickedness. They felt that he who addressed them spoke by authority, and that it would be of little avail to resist his commands.

In this act was foreshadowed one of the great purposes of the Messiah's advent, which was to separate secular from sacred things; to divorce the spirit of worldliness from the spirit of religion. Early in his ministry he laid down the great principle, that men could not serve God and mammon. There could not be two supreme principles in the human soul at the same time. One would necessarily and inevitably destroy the other. If avarice or ambition, or any form of worldliness, held possession of the forces and affections of the soul, the spirit of true worship would become extinct. There is, indeed, no inconsistency between a due attention to worldly business and the discharge of the highest religious duties. We

are bound to serve God, by diligence in business as well as fervency in spirit. And the arenas of trade and commerce open a wide field for the exercise of the noblest virtues, integrity, honor, and usefulness. But it is the crowding of the merchandise of the world within the precincts of religion, that the Saviour so strenuously opposed. It is the union of elements that cannot be mingled, of forces that in their very nature are antagonistic, that he so emphatically denounced. "My kingdom," he declared, "is not of this world." It does not seek the patronage of the world; does not ask its favor, nor depend for support upon its principles or maxims. It is a pure, spiritual kingdom, based upon a more lasting foundation than those upon which earthly empires rest, having nobler aims and more glorious rewards than those which men seek after. The forces by which it is carried forward are all spiritual. Its end is the sanctification of human hearts, — the preparation of man for a purer and loftier state of being. It is a kingdom which embraces the infinite attributes of Jehovah, reflects the life, principles, and spirit of the Saviour, and is the great source of moral light and true happiness. Its power, therefore, depends upon its freedom from worldly influences; and its progress has been in proportion to the spirituality and self-denial of its advocates. Whenever they have come out from the world and nobly battled for truth and righteousness, then this kingdom has advanced. But when it has been united with the civil government, or employed to excuse or sustain any form of evil, it has lost ground.

An act so public and unusual as the expulsion of the traders from the sacred courts, could not fail to be known at once by the priests and rulers. They were doubtless interested in maintaining this traffic, as it must have added to their profits, and helped to sustain their authority. They came therefore to Christ, and while they did not question the justness and propriety of his course, they desired more distinct and satisfactory proofs of his prophetic mission than they had heretofore received. They said to him, "What sign showest thou to us, seeing that thou doest these things?" They thought that if he should immediately perform some stupendous miracle, he would justify his conduct in the eyes of the nation. But he replied, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Astonished at such a declaration, they exclaimed, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" To appreciate the full force of this exclamation, and of the impression that the saying of Christ was calculated to make, we need to understand the precise import of these words; especially as the second temple, erected by the Jews after the captivity, was completed in twenty-one years.

As has already been intimated, the temple in the time of our Lord was really the work of Herod the Great. He did not disturb the old building until he had spent two years in making preparation for the new one. "Josephus declares that a thousand wagons were employed during that time in conveying the stones and timber, that ten thousand artificers fitted all things for the building, and that one

thousand priests who were skilled in architecture, oversaw and directed the works. This last is a remarkable fact, illustrative and confirmatory of the general impression, that the great Levitical body employed their abundant leisure largely in the cultivation of the higher branches of learning, science and art, law, medicine, and architecture. After two years had been thus spent in preparation, the old temple was taken down, not all at once, as some state, but by degrees, as fast as the parts removed could be replaced by the new building. This took place in the twenty-first year of Herod's reign, seventeen years before Christ, and therefore forty-six before the first passover of our Lord's ministry. It is true that the main body of the temple was finished, so as to be fit for divine service in nine years and a half; yet a great number of workmen were still employed in carrying on the out-buildings during all the time of our Saviour's abode upon the earth, and even for some years after his death."

Such being the facts in the case, the Jews received with mingled astonishment and indignation the remark of Christ, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Besides the presumption manifested in their view by such a declaration, they regarded it as in the highest degree disrespectful to allude in such a manner to the temple. They understood the words in a literal sense, although they admit of a symbolical and prophetic meaning. Christ knew that the splendid and imposing structure before him would be destroyed, and that not one stone would be left upon another. He had clearly before

his mind the long train of circumstances that would lead to such a catastrophe. And he knew that in the fall of the temple, the system of rites and formal worship of which it was the type, would fall with it. Not that any fundamental principle or law of the Mosaic dispensation would pass away, for truth, in whatever relation or garb, is unchangeable and eternal. But whatever was temporary, local, or exclusive would be swept away. A national religion would be abolished, to prepare the way for a religion that would embrace all nations. A temple made of perishable materials would fall, that a spiritual temple might rise, more splendid than that upon which Herod had lavished his wealth, more accessible to the masses of the people, and better suited to the moral necessities of man. At the time, however, that Christ uttered this dim prophecy, there were no external indications that the solid and magnificent structure would crumble to dust, and that a new, spiritual, and more enduring edifice would rise, adapted to universal worship. For Christ was comparatively but little known, and his followers were very few. But the divine architect knew his powers and resources. He knew that there was a force within himself to accomplish all that he might predict or desire. Although he commenced the preparations for his sacred edifice on a small scale, yet he knew that the work would advance; that the numbers devoted to his service would increase, that the temple would rise, and its magnificent proportions and costly decorations attract the gaze of millions; that within its walls whole nations would gather,

and that the praises of joyous thousands and the incense of pure devotion would ascend to the Supreme Father.

But the words of Jesus in connection with the time specified, "three days," had a most important prophetic meaning, although it was not understood by the Jews. They required of him who had driven out the traders a sign, as evidence of his authority. He assured them that he would give to them a sign; but it was one that they are not yet prepared to appreciate or believe in. He might at that moment have wrought a miracle to satisfy them on this particular point. But he had a vast and comprehensive plan before him to fulfil. He was acting not for the Jews alone, but for all the inhabitants of the earth; — not to gain a temporary influence, but to establish his authority for all time. He therefore leaves his hearers to meditate upon the utterance that has so astonished them, and goes his way. In due time the sign will be given, — a sign that will be the crowning miracle of Christ's career. After being persecuted, scourged, and crucified, he will appear as the conqueror of the last great enemy, death, — the noblest conquest that can be conceived of by the human mind. And this miracle will establish his authority among all nations. It may be to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to the mass of the human family, it will be the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation.

Although the people did not comprehend the meaning of Christ's declaration, yet his words made a deep impression upon their minds, and they were

ready, when the opportunity occurred, to resent the indignity which they thought had been cast upon the temple. Such an opportunity the crucifixion of our Lord furnished; and as the multitude passed by, "they reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." But how little did those maddened persecutors realize that they were, at that very moment, fulfilling the first part of Christ's prophetic words, and that in three days the whole would be fulfilled. They were engaged in destroying the "temple of the living God," but in three days it would rise with new beauty, and clothed with immortal splendor.

Nor did the disciples understand the true import of the Saviour's words until after the resurrection. "Then," says St. John, they "remembered that he had said this unto them, and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said." Their faith was confirmed in the divine mission of their Master, and they were stimulated to press forward with renewed vigor in his service. His authority was established, not only to purify the temple, but to purify all human hearts, and render them fit temples for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

# VII.

## INTERVIEW WITH NICODEMUS.

"VERILY, VERILY I SAY UNTO THEE, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT, HE CANNOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD." — St. John iii. 5.

THE visit which Christ thus early in his ministry received from Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, afforded him an opportunity to develop the fundamental principles of his system of truth. Though Nicodemus was a Pharisee, and an influential member of the Sanhedrim, yet his mind was free from the spirit of bigotry and intolerance which characterized so many of his associates. He was evidently an honest inquirer after truth. He was open to conviction, and to the force of evidences that appealed to his reason and judgment. The miracles of Christ seem first to have attracted his attention; and, anxious to know more of the character and teachings of so remarkable a person, and one who possessed such supernatural powers, he sought an interview with him by night. Two motives may have influenced him in selecting

this season for his visit. He may have wished not to strengthen the suspicion which might already have been excited, that he was favorably disposed towards Jesus; and he may have desired to see him alone, and selected the hours of night, because during the day the attention of the Messiah was absorbed by the multitudes who surrounded him.

On being introduced into the presence of Christ, "he said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him." The use of the title Rabbi, on this occasion, was very remarkable, considering the dignity and exalted station of the visitor, and the humble origin and appearance of our Lord. It indicated the reverence and confidence which Nicodemus entertained for the being of whom he sought instruction. Participating, as he did, in the general expectation which had been awakened by John the Baptist, that the reign of the Messiah was at hand, and feeling that the existing institutions of religion had in a measure lost their power, he deemed it possible that this remarkable person might be the long expected Messiah. His confidence was further expressed in the declaration, "we know that thou art a teacher sent from God;" and the evidence is, "no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." In the expression "we," he may have included some of his colleagues of the sanhedrim, or he may have designed to convey the idea, that it was generally believed, though few were willing to acknowledge it, that he was a teacher sent from God, and endowed

with supernatural powers. But Christ, knowing the state of mind and moral wants of Nicodemus, and not caring to converse with him upon the messianic kingdom, and those topics to which he attached the most importance, at once announced a doctrine new and startling to his auditor, and one that was directly opposed to his whole system. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The fundamental idea of the system of the Pharisees was, that their Jewish descent would secure to them an entrance into the kingdom of God. Christ seeks to destroy the force of this idea in the mind of Nicodemus, and at the same time he indirectly shows him that faith in the miracles which had been wrought, was not sufficient to secure the salvation of the soul. Besides, he announces a general truth, and one that universally applies to all men, and that is, the necessity of a spiritual regeneration. In opposition to a dependence upon natural birth in a particular line of descent; in opposition to an adherence to external rites and forms, and expectations based upon a secular kingdom, he announces to the world the necessity of the divine life in the soul. This is the central principle of his great system of truth, — the principle that is to go forth to sanctify human hearts, revolutionize the nations, overthrow systems of error, and prepare men for the kingdom of God.

That this doctrine was received with surprise and perplexity by Nicodemus, does not seem to us at all strange, when we consider the state of the religious community at that period. The prevailing sects in Judea were the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes,

severally representing the elements of formalism, scepticism, and mysticism. The former were by far the most powerful, and had the greatest authority in religious and civil matters. Their reverence for the Mosaic law, their rigidness in observing the rites and ceremonies of religion, and their apparent sanctity, gave them great influence with the people. They hoped to reach heaven by their frequent fasting, ablutions, long prayers, and almsgiving. Their pride, avarice, and licentiousness, under the cloak of hypocrisy, are fully brought to view in the writings of the Evangelists.

The Sadducees, their rivals, rejected many of the doctrines of the ancient faith, and were distinguished for their national pride, and hostility to a spiritual religion. The Essenes, though they had many commendable traits and virtues, yet had but little influence over the mass of the people. "In these circumstances," says an able writer, "the religion of their fathers, yet revered as a form, had become cold and sterile, a mere engine of political strife. Long had the shekinah departed from the temple. The voice of its oracle was dumb. More free from the tendency to idolatry than in ancient times, and preserved untarnished in the ancient books, Judaism had lost all regenerative force. The spirit of prophecy was extinct. No holy seers predicted the glories of the Messiah's reign, or denounced the judgments of God against the workers of iniquity. No Deborah sang under the palm-tree between Ramah and Bethel. No Ezekiel thundered between the porch and the altar. The word indeed remained; but it

was a dead letter to the great body of the people. The formalism of the Pharisees, on the one hand, and the scepticism of the Sadducees on the other, paralyzed all pure and earnest feeling. . . . .

"In addition to this, infidel and pagan notions, introduced through the influence of the court, began to prevail in some portions of Judea, particularly in Cæsarea, the Roman capital of the country; while the mass of the people, especially in the larger cities, were intoxicated with a savage fanaticism. Some holy hearts, here and there, in the temple and among the mountains, consecrated by the memories of the past, brooded over the prophecies, and longed for the reign of God upon the earth." But over the great body of the people, ignorance, superstition, and sensuality reigned.

Such was the state of Judea when Christ entered upon his ministry. In the midst of such formalism and moral darkness, he announced the great spiritual doctrine of regeneration. He saw the necessity of this truth to the purification of the human heart, the renovation of society, and the sanctification and salvation of the soul. Nothing short of this would meet the exigencies of the case. Nothing else would break and demolish the shell of formalism, dissipate the mists of error, and restore to man the divine life. He might have labored to abolish certain evil practices of the people, and to introduce certain reforms into the Jewish religion. But by so doing he would be simply working upon the surface of society, while the aim of his teachings was, to reach the centre, to place in the hearts of men a central force, that might work

thence outwardly, and purify and spiritualize the whole man. The former course held out, indeed, the best prospects of success; for few minds were prepared for the latter. A purely spiritual system would be understood and appreciated by comparatively few, and would be opposed by the mass of the people. It would have every form of evil to contend against, — a secularized church, a corrupt priesthood, the depravity and passions of men. But Christ saw that it was the only effectual system, and that although it would be rejected and opposed, yet it would gradually work its way into society, and renovate and bless the world.

Having announced this great truth to Nicodemus, Christ proceeded to explain to him the nature and the efficient cause of the new birth. The mind of the inquirer being perplexed by what had been announced and resting upon the image employed rather than upon the thing or principle signified, Christ added, "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." By the baptism of water, we know that a proselyte was admitted to the Jewish religion, when he publicly declared his renunciation of idolatry, and his belief in the God of Israel, and in the laws of Moses. But this rite was simply an emblem of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The soul, still under an inward defilement, needed cleansing; needed a thorough and complete renovation. John, who came baptizing with water, distinctly declared to the people, that this was not sufficient; that they must be the subjects of a higher baptism, in order to secure the favor of God, and enter heaven.

"I indeed," said he, "baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Nicodemus doubtless understanding the allusion to the water, Christ proceeds to unfold the agency of the spirit in the new birth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," that is, partakes of the corruption of man's fallen nature; while that which is born of the spirit is spirit, is like the heavenly Spirit in purity and holiness. The former is of the earth, earthly. The latter is from above, — cometh down from the Father of spirits, whose nature is love, the essence of whose being is holiness. The former introduces one to a world of temporal good, — to the enjoyment of the sunlight, the beauties of nature, and the various pleasures that here surround us. The latter introduces the soul to a higher life, to communion with the Father, to the radiance and splendors that emanate from the eternal throne, to the excellencies and glories of a spiritual kingdom. The former affords a field for the development of the physical strength, and the maturing of the bodily organs. The latter opens a theatre for the exercise of the noblest powers and divine faculties of the soul. It places within reach of the mind, treasures of infinite value, joys that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived of. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born

of the Spirit." As though Christ had said, "Do not wonder at the necessity and reality of this change wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit; for though it is to you incomprehensible, yet it is not impossible. He who has created the human mind, is familiar with all the avenues to it, and can influence it by a divine agency, though the process is not apparent to our vision." The image by which the point is illustrated is both forcible and beautiful. When we stand upon an eminence, and look around upon the various objects of nature reposing in the calm of a summer's day, there is no force visible by which these objects can be moved or agitated. Every leaf, flower, and spire of grass is motionless. Not a ripple can be discovered upon the surrounding lakes. Not a breath is perceptible in the atmosphere. But suddenly a change comes over the scene. The branches of the trees begin to move to and fro. The waters are agitated. The clouds are flying thick and fast above our heads. The oaks of the forest bend beneath the blast. The calm is exchanged for a scene of wild sublimity and awful grandeur. Whence the wind cometh and whither it goeth, we know not. We may apply to the phenomenon certain laws of science touching the action of heat and cold upon the atmosphere, but to the spectator no causes are visible that give direction and motion to the wind. Thus the moral atmosphere around us is charged with the elements of a divine agency. The movements and operations of this supernatural force are not visible to human sight. But the effects produced by this agency upon the soul, are as marked

as those produced by a powerful wind. The breath of the Almighty quickens the dormant energies of the soul, and gives life and vigor to a spirit before dead in trespasses and sins. The fruits of the Spirit are experienced, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. The mind becomes a garden abounding in the choicest fruits, adorned with every virtue, and fragrant with a celestial atmosphere. The Spirit itself, the author of regeneration, "beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." "Whosoever believeth," says John, "that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God;" and "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world."

It is true, that the Holy Spirit has, in a few instances, been manifested to the senses, as in the dove that descended and rested upon the Saviour at the time of his baptism; in the cloven tongues of fire that rested upon the apostles, and when the "mighty rushing wind filled all the house where they were sitting." But it is obvious that these manifestations were simply emblematical, and were designed to mark the importance of the occasions on which they appeared. The agency is purely spiritual. Its work is spiritual. Its effects are spiritual. At another time Christ said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo! here, or lo! there, for behold it is within you." Its march is attended by no outward display of splendor or power. No blasts of trumpets announce its approach. No steel-clad hosts achieve its conquests, or participate in its triumphs. Its progress is in the hearts of

men. It moves among the affections. It subdues the will, enlightens the conscience, places God upon the throne of the soul; and brings all the feelings, desires, and purposes into sweet subjection to his authority.

Under the explanation, graciously given by our Lord, light breaks in upon the mind of Nicodemus. Yet his perplexity is not entirely removed. "How can these things be?" he asks. Jesus avails himself of this exclamation to lead the learned theologian to examine his own views and knowledge of divine truth, and to feel his need of the Spirit's illumination. "Art thou," he says, "a master or teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Dost thou presume to guide others in the way of truth and righteousness, and art thyself ignorant of that way? Do not the ancient Sciptures which you profess to study and to teach, contain this doctrine, as in the words in Ezekiel? "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." The Jews held to a general idea of a new birth; but they had substituted the form for the spirit; they had put proselytism and baptism in the place of conversion and inward sanctification.

Then Christ, to prove his sincerity, and the truth of his doctrine, and at the same time administer a gentle reproof to his distinguished guest, for being a teacher in Israel, and at the same time ignorant of the first rudiments of religion, declared: "Verily, verily I say unto thee, we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen." We do not teach a system that we do not understand, or concerning which

we have any doubts. We have absolute knowledge on these points so vital to man's salvation. We testify to that we have seen, — to that of which we are fully assured in our own minds. We stand upon the everlasting rock of divine truth, and bear testimony to the great principles that lie at the basis of God's spiritual kingdom.

He then added: "If I have told you earthly things," things capable of being illustrated by earthly objects, or imagery that is familiar to you, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? What hope is there that you would have faith in any revelations that I might make to you of the glories of heaven, the employments of angels, and the nature and majesty of the divine character? And the same inquiry may be put to multitudes at the present day. If they will not admit the first principles of the Christian system; if they will not open their minds to the force of the doctrine that demands a thorough renovation of the heart and the life, how can they be expected to exercise faith in those spiritual themes and sublime revelations that pertain to a heavenly and immortal state? The foundation must obviously be laid before the superstructure can be reared. Sound principles must constitute the basis of a spiritual education. The blindness must be removed from our vision before we can discern celestial objects. The hardness must be removed from the heart, before its sensibilities can be thrilled by the joys of a heavenly state and the music of angelic choirs. The will must be in unison with the divine will, before we can experience the blessedness of being

the sons of God and the heirs of an eternal inheritance.

Christ in the next place unfolds to the mind of Nicodemus the design of his advent, and the absolute necessity of faith in him as the Redeemer of the world; thus bringing to view the great moral forces, by which, through the aid of the Spirit, the work of regeneration was to be accomplished.

Nicodemus supposed that the Messiah would come to be exalted to a magnificent throne, and move among men surrounded with the splendors of royalty, and receive the homage of the nations. But Christ combats this idea with the declaration, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." The allusion to the brazen serpent may not have conveyed to Nicodemus a full and distinct view of Christ's sufferings, and the doctrine of the atonement, but it was sufficient to stimulate his inquiries, and excite his desires to know more of so wonderful and illustrious a teacher.

Then follow the sublime and cheering words, — words that should thrill every heart, and excite the everlasting gratitude of every listener, — "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Though the world was in ruins, — though man had forfeited the favor of his Maker, — though wars, cruelty, injustice, and oppression prevailed among the nations, — though the light of an ancient dispensation had become dim, and its

solemn rites had degenerated into vain superstitions, — though darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people, — though the whole race seemed like a shattered bark tossed upon the billows of a tempestuous ocean, and ready at any moment to be ingulfed, or be dashed upon the rocks, yet God so loved the world as to give his only Son to suffer and die for it. Although the exigency of the case required an infinite sacrifice, and although the ravages of sin could be stayed, and man justified and regenerated only by the crucifixion of the Son of the Most High, still heaven was willing to make the sacrifice. The height, depth, length, and breadth of this love, no finite mind can measure. It spreads out before us as an ocean boundless and fathomless.

But the truth is distinctly brought to light, that this manifestation of love, wonderful and glorious as it is, is not enough to secure the salvation of the soul. There must be faith in this Saviour, in his mission, in the truths of his great system; not a dead faith; not a mere intellectual faith; but a living, vital, soul-pervading faith, — a faith that will work a thorough renovation of the character, a regeneration of the spirit. And the mind that opens itself to the full power of this principle commences its real life. It is placed in just relations to God, his government, and the moral universe. It is united to Christ as the branch is united to the vine, and draws thence its spiritual nourishment and force. Henceforth there is before it a sublime and glorious career. Progress in knowledge, holiness, and happiness is its destiny

God is its end, heaven is its home, and immortal blessedness is its portion.

These great truths of the Gospel system made, as we have reason to believe, a salutary impression upon the mind of Nicodemus. His defence of Christ in the Sanhedrim (John vii. 50), and the part that he took in the burial of Christ (John xix. 39), lead us to believe that he received "the truth as it is in Jesus."

# VIII.

## THE SAMARITAN WOMAN.

"Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore being weary with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. — St. John iv. 5–7.

Our Lord having labored with great success for several months in Judea, resolved to return to Galilee, his former abode. Various reasons have been assigned for this journey, the most probable of which is, that the growing fame of the Saviour had excited the jealousy of the Pharisees to such a degree, that he deemed it expedient to retire for a season from the field, and go where the influence of the chief priests and rulers was not so great. There were several routes by which travellers could reach Galilee, the most direct of which passed directly through Samaria, a country lying between Judea and Galilee. This route, however, though much the shortest, was seldom travelled by the Jews, as their hatred of the Samaritans induced them to shun their

foes as much as possible. The most rigid and bigoted of the Jews, considered themselves polluted if they had any intercourse with the Samaritans. They regarded them with even more contempt and abhorrence than they did the heathen. The Saviour, who did not share in the least degree in their prejudices, but had a heart full of sympathy and love for all classes of men, resolved to pass directly through this despised country.

On his way, being greatly fatigued by the journey, and suffering from thirst, he sat down about mid-day by the side of Jacob's well, to rest and refresh himself. This well, from the historical associations connected with it, is an object of great interest with all pilgrims and travellers. Maundrell, in describing it, says: "At one third of an hour from Naplosa, we came to Jacob's well, famous not only on account of its author, but much more for that memorable conference which our blessed Saviour here had with the woman of Samaria. Over the well there stood formerly a large church, erected by that great and devout patroness of the Holy Land, the Empress Helena; but of this the voracity of time, assisted by the hands of the Turks, has left nothing but a few foundations remaining. The well is covered at present with an old stone vault, into which you are let down; and then removing a broad, flat stone, you discover the mouth of the well itself. It is dug in a firm rock, and is about three yards in diameter, and thirty-five in depth, five of which we found full of water."

When Dr. Robinson, during his researches in the

Holy Land, visited the well, he found it bearing the marks of great antiquity, but dry and deserted. A large stone laid over its mouth, and as it was late and the twilight almost gone, his party made no attempt to remove it.

Another distinguished traveller says: "This spot is so distinctly marked by the Evangelists, and so little liable to uncertainty, from the circumstance of the well itself, and the features of the country, that if no tradition existed for its identity, the site of it could hardly be mistaken. Perhaps no Christian scholar ever attentively read the fourth chapter of St. John without being struck with the numerous internal evidences of truth which crowd upon the mind in its perusal. Within so small a compass, it is impossible to find in other writings so many sources of reflection and of interest. Independently of its importance as a theological document, it concentrates so much information, that a volume might be filled with the illustration it reflects on the history of the Jews, and on the geography of their country."

By the side of this well, Jesus, a weary traveller, sat down. His disciples he had sent away to purchase food, as they could not be entertained at the houses of the Samaritans. For it appears that these people were not slow to return the hatred which was exercised towards them by their self-righteous and haughty neighbors. While Jesus was thus sitting alone, meditating perhaps upon the scenes and events suggested by the memorable locality which he occupied, "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink."

As we advance in the narrative given of this interesting interview, we shall find the following points unfolded. The fountains of salvation are opened; the evidences of Christ's messiahship are furnished; the nature of true spiritual worship is explained, and the way is prepared for the preaching of the everlasting gospel to the people of Samaria.

The request made by Christ excites in the woman the greatest astonishment. "How is it," she replies, "that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." Jesus, almost forgetting his thirst in his anxiety to impart spiritual benefits to the woman, availed himself of the occasion to instruct and enlighten her mind. Instead of wasting time in discussing the prejudices that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans, he at once said to her: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." By the phrase "living water," although Christ used it in a spiritual sense, is understood fresh spring water that is constantly flowing, and this was the idea that the woman received. Of course she was delighted at the thought of obtaining pure, fresh water, without the fatigue of passing daily over a dusty road to obtain it. But Christ, perceiving that he had arrested her attention, although the spiritual import of the words was not understood, proceeded still further to develop the great truth which was embodied in this beautiful image. In answer to the inquiry, Whether he was

greater than their father Jacob, who gave to them the well, he replied, and the language is full of intense meaning to all, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but it shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." To the truth of the first part of this proposition, the poor Samaritan woman could bear abundant testimony; for she had often travelled far in the heat of the day to draw water from this deep well, to quench her thirst. She also had experience of the unsatisfying nature of all earthly good. She had lived a life of sin. Her mind was in darkness. She had some conceptions of a coming Messiah, but they were vague, and seemed to have had but little practical influence upon her. "If thou knewest the gift of God," said Christ to her,—if she had but been aware that the infinite Jehovah had presented to the world no less a gift than his only and well-beloved Son; if she had known the divine nature and exalted character of Him who said to her, Give me to drink, she would at once have asked for the greatest of all blessings. She would have asked for the living waters of salvation, which would have satisfied the longings of the soul,—which become to all that receive them, a fountain of spiritual delights, springing up, or flowing on, to everlasting life. And these rich gifts Christ was ready to bestow even upon a poor and unworthy Samaritan woman. He had left his throne of glory and the high honors of a celestial court, that he might place infinite treasures before the poor and the sinful children of men. Perhaps he

planned this journey, and tarried at the well in order that he might have this interview with the Samaritan woman, and offer to her eternal life. And if the greatest of all preachers, one who spake as never man spake, was ready to exhibit divine truth to a single listener, shall any of his followers deem any opportunity for doing good as too trivial to be improved? Christ might have remained in the cities of Judea, and daily addressed admiring thousands. He might have attracted multitudes by the eloquence of his words, the force of his doctrines, and the wonderful displays of his miraculous power. But we find him far away from the seats of authority and the applause of the multitude, and, as a weary traveller, engaged in instructing a despised Samaritan woman. He opens before her the great doctrines of a free salvation; of an abundance of living waters, of which all who are willing may partake, and of everlasting life; doctrines which patriarchs and prophets would have rejoiced to have heard, and which were worthy the attention of the most gifted and enlightened audience that could be assembled upon the earth.

Jesus also unfolds in an indirect, yet most skilful manner, the evidences of his Messiahship. He institutes inquiries, and makes statements with regard to the woman's past life, which led her to exclaim, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." Light begins to break in upon her mind. The truth flashes upon her that she is conversing with no ordinary person, but with one who could read all the secrets of her past life. The doctrine of Christ's omniscience is in fact presented to her mind, to convince

her of the reality of the living waters to which her attention had been directed. She has the proof that her instructor is not only willing, but able to bestow the highest and most precious spiritual gifts. He does not enter into a formal and abstruse demonstration of his divinity, but seizes at once upon those evidences that are calculated to make the deepest and most lasting impression upon the woman's mind. She is startled with a recital of her whole history, by one who is a perfect stranger to her; by one whom she took to be a prejudiced Jew, who would have no dealings with the Samaritans, and who would not receive even the slightest favor from their hands. She hears from his lips the minutest events in her life described, and a degree of knowledge is displayed that could belong to no human intellect.

In thus accompanying promises with the proof of an ability to fulfil them, Christ acted in accordance with his usual custom, when developing his mission and his system of truth. While requiring the exercise of faith, he furnished the foundation upon which it should rest. Though the supernatural element ran through his history, from the period of his birth to the day of his ascension, yet he ever regarded the claims of human reason. He was ever ready to recommend his doctrines by an appeal to evidence; to the prophetic utterances respecting him contained in the ancient Scriptures, to his life, his miracles, and to the various proofs he gave that he was the Son of God. He wished for none other, than a firm and solid basis upon which to rest his cause.

The woman being satisfied that he who addressed her was a prophet, availed herself of the opportunity, to obtain if possible a solution of the vexed question which had so long divided the Jews and Samaritans. As they stood where the lofty summit of Mount Gerizim was in full sight, the woman, while perhaps pointing to it, said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." This controversy arose at the time of the return of the Jews from their captivity. The Samaritans desired to unite with them in rebuilding the temple, and wished to be associated with them in religious faith and services. But the Jewish rulers repulsed them, and declared that Cyrus had committed the work solely to their hands. Feeling indignant at the opposition of the Jews, they resolved to erect a temple upon Mount Gerizim, a mountain with which there were sacred associations, in connection with the entrance of the Israelites into the promised land, and the blessings pronounced upon those who obeyed the law of the Lord. This measure very naturally increased the hostility that existed between the two nations, and gave rise to a bitter controversy as to the place where divine worship should be rendered. The Samaritans contended that they held the only pure, legitimate, and divinely appointed services, and that their temple received the sanction of the divine presence. The Jews, on the other hand, claimed that Jerusalem was the capital of God's kingdom on this earth, and that the rites performed in their temple were alone acceptable to Jehovah. The antagonism

created by this discussion engendered the most bitter hatred between the two parties. They would not entertain each other at their houses, nor have any communication, except occasionally for the purposes of trade. It was very natural, therefore, that the Samaritan woman should seek light upon a point which so divided the two nations, and which was deemed so vital to their spiritual interests and hopes. And the reply which Christ made to her was applicable not only to the sacred mountain that was in sight, and to Jerusalem, but to all localities with which men might suppose that special divine favors were connected. He swept away the whole system of formal rites and local worship. It had been necessary, indeed, in times past, to connect a knowledge of the Deity with prescribed ceremonies and sacred localities; but that necessity existed no longer. "Woman," said Jesus, "believe me; the hour cometh, and now is, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father," that is, according to the present forms and usages. "But the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

The time had come for the introduction of a new and spiritual system, a system not confined to formal rites, but seeking access to the human heart; not limited to the summit of a mountain, or to the walls of Jerusalem, but spreading over the nations, and offering its blessings to the whole human family. To unfold this dispensation to the world, was an important part of the Messiah's work. Indeed it com-

menced with his life on the earth. At his birth, the purest moral light dawned upon the world. In his teachings, example, and mighty works, he revealed the Father, the principles of his government, and the nature of true religion. He makes proclamation not only to the Samaritan woman, but to all mankind, "God is a spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Both the Jews and Samaritans worshipped the true God, but their ideas of his nature and character were crude and limited. Their conceptions were based upon the visible and extraordinary manifestations that he made of himself in ages past, and they thought of him as a being afar off, who could only be approached through certain forms, and in certain places. But Christ announces that he is an all-pervading Spirit, a divine essence that fills the universe and demands a spiritual worship. He would have every mountain and hill and valley consecrated to his service. From every city he would see rising the incense of pure devotion. Every human heart he would transform into a sacred temple. In every spirit he would establish a "Holy of holies." All the people, even the Gentile world, he would make "kings and priests unto God."

And under this dispensation, instead of beholding the Deity in a burning bush, we behold him in every star that glitters in the heavens, in the light and glory of every morning's sun. Instead of recognizing his goodness in the falling manna, we perceive it in the regular succession of seed-time and harvest, and in the rich variety and abundance of fruits which the

earth annually yields. Instead of travelling towards a promised land abounding in temporal blessings, we are urged to press forward towards a celestial paradise, towards a heavenly city that hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God. Instead of embodying our reverence in types and forms, we are required to worship "in spirit and in truth."

In this requisition there is a fulness and depth of meaning that is worthy of our profound attention. The very nature of spiritual worship, involves a union between our souls and the Infinite Being, a union of feeling, sentiment, purpose, and will. Such worship cannot be rendered except by a soul wholly consecrated to God, and thoroughly pervaded by a spirit of holiness. If the supreme affections are fastened upon the world, or any inferior good, or if there is a disposition to substitute the form for the reality, the worship is vitiated. In fact it does not exist; for there cannot be a spiritual worship that is not genuine. It is an element that cannot be counterfeited. The Saviour, in designating those who shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, calls them true worshippers; and he adds, "the Father seeketh such to worship him." He does not seek the formalist, nor him whose religion is confined to a mountain or a temple, but the sincere, earnest worshipper. Nor is this requisition fully met by the spirit of devotion, however pure and lofty it may be. There must accompany it a life of rectitude and cordial obedience; a life based upon the principles of divine truth. Worship without service; devotion without corresponding religious principles, go for

nothing in the estimation of the omniscient Being. This is very forcibly presented in the language of Jehovah as uttered by his prophet: "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth. Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed." God is most honored by a just, humane, holy life. He is worshipped in every benevolent deed, and in every earnest endeavor to promote human welfare and the divine glory. And such worshippers he seeks in all ages and in all nations. He seeks them to maintain and recommend the true faith, and to perpetuate a spiritual worship that will be acceptable to him.

The instructions thus imparted to the Samaritan woman made a deep impression upon her mind; and when she learned that it was the promised Messiah who addressed her, she was filled with amazement and delight. Forgetting the object that brought her to the well, she left her water-pot and hastened to the city, to inform her friends of what had transpired. The Saviour also finding a field of great usefulness opening before him, seemed to forget his fatigue and hunger. His disciples having returned with food, entreated him to partake of it and refresh himself. But he replied: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." He found a purer pleasure, a richer entertainment in doing the will of his Father, than in partaking of the luxuries that this earth furnished. Although he was hungry and thirsty

and exhausted, yet his highest enjoyment consisted in imparting spiritual benefits to the needy and the perishing. Beholding, on the one hand, the throngs coming towards him from the city, and, on the other, the husbandmen casting the seed into the ground, he avails himself of the imagery presented to his mind, to illustrate the great work upon which he had already entered among the Samaritans. Alluding to a phrase familiar with the people at that season of the year, that "there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest," he added, pointing to the approaching multitudes: "Lift up your eyes, and look on the field; for they are white already to harvest." In the natural world, four months must elapse before the ripened grain will wave in the breeze; but in the spiritual world, though the seed was so recently sown, yet the fields are already white to the harvest. And the great reaper is ready to gather it in. He is ready to receive to himself all who will exercise repentance and faith. And many believed on him as "the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Many are to-day rejoicing in the glories of his everlasting kingdom, as the fruits of that short sermon which was preached to a poor Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

# IX.

## CHRIST PREACHING UPON THE MOUNT.

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him. and he opened his mouth and taught them. — Matthew v. 1, 2.

We now come to view Christ as a public preacher of divine truth. He held, as we are aware, many offices. He came to fulfil a complex mission; a mission, varied in its bearings, as well as glorious in its results. He was not only a Redeemer, but a Prophet, a Priest, and a King. He uttered and fulfilled prophecy. He was a teacher sent from God, to teach all other teachers, to unfold the treasures of infinite wisdom, — to bring life and immortality to light. As a King, he ever maintained a royal bearing. Though he was poor and despised, and had not where to lay his head, he was still a Prince. If he had thrown aside the robes, he had not thrown aside the nature of his kingship. Neither the ridicule heaped upon him, nor the opposition that he encountered, nor even his crucifixion, extinguished his sovereignty.

But it is with Christ, in his office as a preacher, that

we are now concerned. During his ministry, he often taught in the Jewish synagogue, in the temple, and by the wayside. He also seized upon important occasions for developing and illustrating the fundamental doctrines of divine truth. Such an occasion was that which called forth the memorable Sermon on the Mount. The hostility which the Pharisees entertained towards Christ, began to excite a general opposition against him throughout the land. He was charged with heresy and blasphemy by the inhabitants of Galilee, and the prejudices which had been aroused against him, were daily gaining ground among a large portion of the community. It became, therefore, necessary for him publicly to explain and vindicate his doctrines; and this he did in a most simple, yet masterly manner. Returning from one of his preaching tours in Galilee, a great multitude, attracted by the eloquence of his words and the novelty of his mighty deeds, followed him. Towards evening they drew near to Capernaum, and rested at the foot of a mountain. The next morning, as the sun was gilding the surrounding hill-tops, and pouring its splendor through the valleys, and while the air was fragrant with the opening flowers, and vocal with the songs of birds, the Saviour, refreshed by sleep, selected a favorable position for addressing the multitude. He did not wait until he had entered the city of Capernaum, and notified its inhabitants of his intended discourse, but, with his characteristic simplicity, availed himself of the opportunity afforded by the presence of a promiscuous crowd, who seemed willing to listen to his words. He preferred also to

be out in the open air, surrounded by the beauties and sublimities of nature, that bore the impress of his own creative wisdom and power. The mountain served him as a pulpit. The broad canopy above was the dome of his great temple. The surrounding mountain peaks were the columns wrought by the Supreme Architect. The morning mist, tinged by the rays of the sun, threw a celestial halo over the scene. Below were the eager multitude, waiting for the words of wisdom that were to drop from heavenly lips. Above were angel forms, visible not to human sight, but known by him whom they were appointed to watch over, and whom they were all commanded to worship.

The silence of the hour was broken by the utterance of the most remarkable, impressive, and important discourse that was ever listened to on earth. It is not my purpose to treat in detail of its several principles and doctrines, but I wish simply to point out some of the general characteristics of Christ as a preacher of divine truth.

In the first place, in this as well as all his other discourses, *he deals with the most vital and fundamental of moral truths.* Upon the minor matters of forms, external rites, and what may be termed the mint, anise, and cumin of religion, he bestows no attention. He grapples with the life-questions that pertain to the divine government and human responsibility and destiny. He announced the object of his advent in these emphatic words: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth." He came ladened with the treas-

ures of infinite wisdom which he scattered in every pathway that he trod, in every city that he visited, in every circle in which he moved. He came to clear away the mists of error, to break up the fatal delusions into which mankind had fallen, and to reveal a system of ethics and theology that would satisfy the soul and guide it to happiness and glory.

In the Sermon on the Mount, his particular design was to exhibit the nature of his kingdom, and its connection with the ancient dispensation. He wished to disabuse the minds of his hearers of the idea that he stood in any way in antagonism to the Mosaic system, for which they entertained so much reverence; and he endeavored to convince them that that system was preparatory to his; was the type and forerunner of the glorious reality which he revealed. His sermon served, therefore, as a bridge from the law to the gospel, over which the Jews might travel from a region of forms, to one of spiritual truth and life. His object was to break in upon their modes of thinking upon religious subjects, and lead them to take spiritual views, and seek a higher standard of moral excellence. The very first passage in the discourse, is a blow levelled against the pride of the people and their Pharisaic self-righteousness. The poor in spirit are pronounced blessed, or happy, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This glorious inheritance belongs, not to those who boast of their Jewish descent, and of their peculiar national privileges, but who, feeling the poverty of all earthly rites and rewards, seek for the riches of a spiritual kingdom.

Many of his hearers were ambitious, and expected

that Christ would establish a splendid worldly empire which would overshadow and subdue all others; that his divine power would be employed in founding a magnificent throne, and founding military forces that would be the terror of all surrounding nations. To meet and dispel this false idea, Christ next declares, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." As though he had said, "those who are the least ambitious for power shall obtain it. Conquests will indeed be made, not however by force of arms, nor even by overwhelming displays of miraculous power, but by the might of meekness and gentleness of spirit. The nations will be swayed, not by a sceptre of iron, but by a sceptre of love." And this process we see now going on, as the kingdoms of the earth are becoming the kingdoms of our Lord. The forces that subdue them are moral forces. We send out to a numerous and great nation, a few humble Christian missionaries, whose only weapons are faith and love. With these, and these alone, they are instructed to take possession of the kingdom in the name of their great Master.

The Jews also prided themselves upon their rigidness in external purity, and in avoiding every thing that was deemed unclean. But Christ, without exciting their prejudices by directly attacking their superstitious notions upon this point, said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." My system requires purity, as well as the Mosaic; but mine must be internal, — must regulate the thoughts and motives, must fit the soul for communion with God. And this he endeavored to show, constituted

the divine life, after which every earnest spirit should aspire. The Jews were looking for the mere shadows of religion; this was the reality, — the vital principle that would unite the soul to God, and qualify it for the society of all holy beings.

Thus the Great Teacher goes through with his memorable discourse, every utterance containing an important principle, every sentiment antagonistic to the opinions of the world, and every influence tending to elevate and spiritualize the nature of man. In treating of the ancient law, he contends that it is fulfilled in the law of the Christian life. And he reduces the whole to this simple declaration, to love God above all things, and our neighbor as ourselves. "On these two commandments," he says, "hang all the law and the prophets:" that is, all the teachings of the Old Testament are condensed into these two commands.

*Another characteristic of our Lord's teaching was, that he spoke with authority.* This authority was not only connected with his being appointed as the representative of the Divine Majesty, but it was vested in his own person. He taught as a divine being, uttering truths known to his own mind from all eternity; truths as unchangeable as the throne of God. Philosophers who preceded him gave to the world only opinions, the weight of which depended upon the soundness of the arguments, or the logical train of the reasoning upon which they were based. But truth proceeded from Christ, as light proceeds from its natural source, the sun. His authority he distinctly and repeatedly affirmed: "I am the light of

the world;" "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

But we may be asked, How can we confide in the integrity of these affirmations? What evidences have we that the Saviour's declarations can be implicitly relied upon? I would reply, all the evidences that the nature of the case admits of. The very doctrines which Christ promulgated, carry with them internal evidence of their truth. They are as clearly adapted to the wants of our moral nature, as light is adapted to the eye, or air is suited to the lungs. They are such truths as we should expect to receive from a God of perfect benevolence and holiness. The Sermon on the Mount bears the stamp of a divine origin. Were its principles universally adopted and acted upon, it would make a heaven of this earth. For every sentiment is luminous with heavenly beauty and celestial light. They constitute the basis of the benevolence, happiness, and glory of the angelic hosts. They aim at the annihilation of every base passion of the soul, — envy, malice, revenge, — of every unholy thought and carnal desire. Under their sway, wars, oppression, injustice, and every form of sin would be banished from the earth. An ingenuous mind, therefore, can no more separate the idea of divine truth from the teachings of Christ, than we can separate the idea of beauty from a flower, or the idea of grandeur from mountain scenery.

Contrast this system with any other, — with the best and most profound that human agency has devised, and its superior excellence is at once ap-

parent. Contrast it with the most rigid and apparently the most sacred of formal systems, and you cannot fail to be impressed with its divine force, beauty, and life-giving power. In entering the gorgeous edifice of formalism, "one's feelings," to use the image of another, "are very much such as might belong to a descent into some stalactite cavern, the grim magnificence of which is never cheered by the life-giving beams of heaven; for there is no noon there — no summer. The wonders of the place must be seen by the glare of artificial light; human hands carry hither and thither a blaze, which confounds objects as much as it reveals them, and which fills the place more with fumes than with any genial influence. In this dim theatre, forms stand out of more than mortal mien, as if a senate of divinities had here assembled; but approach them, all is hard, cold, silent. Drops are thickly distilling from the vault; nay, every stony icicle that glistens in the light, seems as if endued with penitence, or as if contrition were the very temper of the place; but do these drops fertilize the ground on which they fall? No; they do but trickle a moment, and then add stone to stone, and chill to chill. Does the involuntary exclamation break from the bosom in such a place — Surely this is the gate of heaven! Rather one shudders with the apprehension that he is entering the shadows of the valley of death; and that the only safety is in a quick return to the upper world."

Now go from thence to the great temple of moral truth which Christ has erected. As you enter, you feel that the very atmosphere is impregnated with

the warmth of heavenly love. The light that pours through the gorgeous windows appears to come directly from the eternal throne. The spirit of deity pervades the edifice. Every column and arch seem to lift the soul upward. The swell of the organ, the notes of praise, touch the tenderest and holiest sensibilities of the soul. He who ministers at the altar, we are confident is our great High-Priest, who is not only a teacher, but the living oracle of moral truth. Over the altar we read the sentiment of true devotion: "God is a Spirit, and they who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."

The authority of our Great Teacher is also strengthened by the evidences that he furnished of his divine nature. In fulfilling so accurately the prophecies respecting the life, character, and deeds of the Messiah, he substantiated his claims to divinity. By the variety and undoubted character of his miracles, he proved, beyond all dispute, his power over the elements and laws of nature. Diseases fled before his presence. The blind opened their eyes to gaze upon him. The dead heard his voice and came forth. The storms and the waves of the sea obeyed him.

His character also gave authority to his words. His whole career was a living epistle, known and read of all men. Every moral precept which he taught was illustrated in his life. His holiness was apparent to every beholder. No taint of sin ever touched his heart. No impure or selfish motive ever gained access to his spirit. Like the light from heaven, he touched the earth without being contaminated by its influences, moved among men without

feeling the power of their corruptions. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." His benevolence, too, was apparent in every word and deed. As he stood upon the mount, a cloud of goodness seemed to encircle him. In the very commencement of his discourse he poured forth a profusion of the richest blessings, showing that it was his highest delight, as well as his prerogative, to bless. As he advanced in his career, this feature of his character became more and more conspicuous. It shone forth with peculiar brightness in his seasons of trial. As dangers thickened around him; as the storms of persecution increased in violence, his love, like a deep swelling tide, rose above them all. Even his cruel arrest, his mock trial, and the terrors of the crucifixion, did not move him.

Is not, then, the authority of this Great Teacher established? Shall we not rest with unwavering confidence upon the truths which he uttered?

The style of Christ's teaching is also worthy of our notice. He usually uttered his thoughts in simple, concise, and bold sentences; such as were adapted to the capacities of his hearers, and might be easily treasured up in the memory. Sometimes his words flow on like a quiet, clear, and beautiful stream, refreshing the weary spirits of his auditors, and promoting the growth of every Christian virtue and grace. Sometimes he expressed himself in startling and paradoxical utterances, in order to arrest attention, and fasten the truth upon the mind. When his object is to expose the wickedness and hypocrisy of

the Scribes and Pharisees, his words fall with a crushing weight, and carry with them a fearful power. With an unsparing hand he tears off their mask of hypocrisy, and drags to the light their iniquities. Breaking through the shell of their rigid formalities, he enables his hearers to see their true character in all its blackness and deformity. When depicting the scenes of the judgment-day, there is a stately grandeur and overpowering solemnity in the language which he employs. We almost hear the trumpet-blast of his voice pealing through the tombs and caverns of the deep, and wherever the myriads of the earth's inhabitants sleep. We see in imagination the vast throngs filling the air, and gathering around the supreme tribunal. The Judge takes his seat. The books are opened. An awful silence reigns over the immense multitude. As the destiny of the different classes is gradually revealed, our sympathies are strongly excited. We rejoice with the righteous in their rewards, and shudder at the terrible doom that overhangs the wicked. The words, "depart ye cursed," carry with them an awful import. We cannot look down into the depths of their meaning, without emotions of indescribable terror. The words descriptive of the blessedness of the righteous, carry with them the richest consolations and most glorious hopes. The welcome that falls upon the ear is, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The single word, "Come," decides the destiny of the redeemed soul. Its meaning extends over the ages of immortality. It includes

access to the Father, an entrance into the palace of the great King, companionship with holy angels, and a participation in all the glories of the Saviour's reign.

The promise, too, of a "kingdom prepared for the saints, from the foundation of the world," has depths of glorious meaning that no finite intellect can explore, that no human eye can gaze upon. A kingdom that has been so long in a course of preparation, and upon which the divine power and skill have been for ages expended, must necessarily surpass all human comprehension.

It was also a peculiarity of Christ's teachings, to embody important truths in familiar, striking, and beautiful images, drawn from nature and scenes with which the people were familiar. His disciples were denominated the light of the world; the salt of the earth; a city set upon a hill which could not be hid. God's care over them was enforced by a representation of the care which he exercised over the lilies of the valley, and the grass of the field. At the close of his Sermon on the Mount, he compares him who heareth his sayings and doeth them, to the wise man who built his house upon a rock. The other class he likens to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand, a house which could not endure the force of the storm,—imagery which in all its details, strikes the mind as at once beautiful and forcible. And these images served not only to illustrate, but also to preserve moral truths, so that they could be handed down from age to age unimpaired. For while language is constantly changing, and the meaning of words varies with the progress of society, the objects and scenes in nature remain the same.

The force of these images drawn from nature, we can feel and appreciate as fully as those who first listened to them.

In conclusion, ought we not to consider our personal relations to this great Teacher? We may listen with interest to his discourses, admiring the sublimity of his truths, the beauty of his language, and the force of his imagery. But the question is, do his teachings reach the heart and regulate the life? Do we adopt them as the foundation of our faith, as the basis of our hopes? If we would enter into the hidden meaning of these principles, and experience their blessed influence, we must obey them. "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine." Holy obedience will make every thing clear to his vision, will clear away the mists from his pathway, and make his course like "the shining light that shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day."

"How sweetly flow'd the Gospel's sound
From lips of gentleness and grace,
When list'ning thousands gather'd round,
And joy and reverence fill'd the place.

"From heaven he came — of heaven he spoke,
To heaven he led his followers' way;
Dark clouds of gloomy night he broke,
Unveiling an immortal day.

"'Come, wanderers, to my Father's home,
Come, all ye weary ones, and rest!'
Yes! sacred Teacher, — we will come —
Obey thee, — love thee, and be blest!

"Decay, then, tenements of dust!
Pillars of earthly pride, decay!
A nobler mansion waits the just,
And Jesus has prepared the way."

# X.

## CHRIST WALKING ON THE SEA.

"In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea."—Matthew xiv. 25.

This scene, according to three of the Evangelists, occurred immediately after the miraculous feeding of the five thousand in the desert. That miracle had awakened such an enthusiasm among the people, that they desired at once to make Christ a king. Christ knowing their designs, and wishing in the most effectual yet quiet way to defeat them, "constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people." Perhaps he supposed that the multitude would be more easily dispersed, if they saw his disciples departing from him. He wished not only to frustrate their plans of taking him by force and making him a king, but also to lead them to reflect upon the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and the true ends for which he manifested his miraculous power. They looked upon him as one eminently fitted to be placed at the head of the nation, and to restore to it, its ancient grandeur and glory. They

recognized in the rapid multiplication of the loaves and fishes, a power capable of sustaining armies in a desert, or during a protracted siege; and they were ready to rally under such a leader, and to march forth to the conquest of their enemies. But Christ having dismissed his disciples, sent away the people, convinced that he was not seeking for temporal authority, but had some higher purpose in view.

According to his custom, as evening was approaching, he retired alone to a solitary mountain for prayer. Instead of seeking repose after the labors of the day, he preferred to worship in these wild and rugged temples of nature, and to prepare himself, by spiritual communion with the Father, for the prosecution of his great work. While he was in the mountain on this memorable night, the heavens became overshadowed with dark and heavy clouds. The winds were heard howling through the forests and valleys, and a wild storm raged upon the land and the sea. At midnight, when the tempest was at its height, the Messiah thought of his disciples, and was doubtless offering up fervent supplications in their behalf. According to his directions they had embarked on board their vessel, and the wind being contrary to the course which they were to sail, they were exposed to its full force. The darkness of the night, the extreme severity of the wind, the wild billows that surrounded them and threatened every moment to engulf them, filled their minds with terror. Besides, the consciousness that their Lord was absent, added to the fearful gloom of the night. If he was only present, as on a former occasion, to still

this tempest, and calm the tempestuous waves, their fears would all be dissipated. But he is away upon a distant mountain, perhaps they think, not knowing their peril; for their views of his attributes and powers were yet very imperfect.

*The perilous situation of these disciples, the manner in which they were relieved, and the trial of Peter's faith*, are points that have not simply a local and temporary interest. Like most of the scenes and events in the history of our Lord, they are of universal interest, and are applicable to his followers in all nations and ages of the world. As the same sun that shone upon the pathways of the earliest generations, is equally adapted to our organs of vision, and its light hailed with as much joy as though it was newly created for our benefit, so the same Sun of righteousness that illumined the minds of the apostles and primitive Christians, shines with its resplendent beams upon us; and is as perfectly adapted to our moral necessities as though the Saviour should again appear upon the earth. We need not a newly created physical universe, in order to be impressed with the infinite and glorious attributes of the Deity. The same world with its beautiful decorations, its mighty forces, its miraculous changes, with the rolling seasons, its oceans, lakes, mountains, and valleys; the same stars with their soft and persuasive eloquence, — their wonderfully suggestive yet mysterious influence; the vast solitudes in which they repose, serve us as well as they did our most remote ancestry. Indeed their antiquity adds greatly to their power. They come to us

with an influence which has been accumulating for ages. We are glad to look upon the same sun upon which all eyes have gazed, — to be watched over by the same stars that have looked down upon all the changes in the world's history, — to tread upon the same globe, on which are left the footprints of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the noble army of martyrs. We are glad to breathe the same atmosphere in which holy men of old moved, and which has been vocal with the songs of poets, the eloquence of ancient orators, and the praises of the devout in all languages and all ages.

The eighteen hundred years that have rolled over Christianity and over the scenes in the life of its divine author, add, in our view, to their moral force. Each century having made its contributions to the evidences in favor of this divine religion, we inherit the whole stock of proof, just as the young astronomer, in entering upon his noble science, becomes heir to all the discoveries and progress that have been made by the most gifted minds in this department of human knowledge. In following, too, Christ, we follow in the track of a great multitude of the best, noblest, holiest men that have ever lived upon the earth. We feel the power of their example, the electric influence of their zeal and love. And we are content with the spiritual presence of our Master, without his immediate personal advent to our earth. We are content with the fulfilment of his promise: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

But we hasten to apply these general principles to the case before us.

The disciples were out upon the sea, exposed to the dangers of a fearful storm. Only the day before they were with the Lord of glory, witnessing one of the most remarkable miracles which had been wrought. Then admiration was excited by so wonderful a display of divine power. They rejoiced that so many thousands of persons were permitted to witness it, and to receive the moral impressions which it was calculated to produce. They felt that the cause which they had espoused was rising; and that in following such a Master they had nothing to fear. Their confidence was established that before them there was a career of honor and glory unsurpassed in the history of mankind. But the very night after this scene, they were tossed upon the waves of a tempestuous sea, and struggling in vain with their oars to reach the land. So great was their danger, that they knew not but that each succeeding wave that swept by, would engulf them. To such sudden changes in one's circumstances and prospects, we are all liable. To-day, all may be bright, hopeful, and prosperous. We may stand upon the firm earth, and look out upon a serene sky, upon smiling verdure, and the beauties that the sunshine has awakened around us. We may be surrounded by kind friends, by the refinements and pleasures of social intercourse, and by the choicest spiritual blessings. To-morrow, we may be cut off from these privileges and enjoyments. We may be out upon the dark ocean of affliction, encompassed by the waves of sorrow, feeling that our frail bark may at any instant be shattered. The Saviour, in whom we have trusted, may

seem to be far away in some distant mountain that we cannot reach. But recently we had communion with him, felt the strengthening influence of his presence, and were filled with admiration in contemplating the views granted to us of his divine power and majesty. Now clouds and darkness encircle him. We hear not his voice, see not the brightness of his countenance, feel not the warm breath of his love.

Go through even Christendom, and what multitudes will you find struggling with some of the various forms of sorrow. How many feel that they are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, their pathways lying through gloomy deserts, over burning sands, and amid hardships that at times seem too severe for human endurance. They have literally no abiding city here. They seem to have been cast upon this bleak and desolate creation to be buffeted by its storms, and to have their souls tried by its keenest sorrows. Some honest and devout hearts feel the pressure of the ills of poverty; no slight pressure, though it is so common. Death is common, but none the less a terrible messenger for this.

Others are strangers to health, scarcely knowing what it is to be free from bodily pains and infirmities. Weeks, months, and years roll on, bringing with them no relief.

With others, the fountains of sorrow are kept almost perpetually open, by the loss of near and dear friends. One after another they are snatched away. Billow follows billow in rapid succession, sweeping away the objects to which the warmest earthly affections are fastened. So great are oftentimes the trials

of life, that one is forced to ask, Is this the end of our being, to be tossed upon the waves of sorrow, and to be the victims of the storms that rage around us? Is there no power that can lift from the soul its heavy burdens, and afford consolation to the tried and bereaved spirit. The answer to these inquiries may be found in the relief that came to the disciples while in the height of the perils of their voyage. They supposed that their Saviour was far away, and at the fourth watch of the night, which was about three o'clock in the morning, while they were toiling at their oars, they had not the slightest reason to expect any aid from him. But suddenly, as they looked out upon the wild waste of waters, they descried a form moving upon the surface of the sea. Supposing that it was a spirit or an apparition, they were exceedingly terrified, and cried out for fear. Their minds being in an anxious and excited state, and their bodies being exhausted by fatigue and exposure, such a scene was calculated to fill them with terror. But soon a voice comes to them over the waves: "Be of good cheer, it is I." That voice they immediately recognized, and their fears were dissipated. With a joy that can be more easily imagined than described, they welcomed Christ to the ship, knowing that his presence would be an ample protection from all danger. At the very moment that they supposed he was far distant from them, he was at the side of their vessel. Perhaps he had been near them the whole night, and had been watching over them, and guarding them from the perils of the deep. Perhaps he refrained from making himself

known until this late hour of the night, in order to more deeply impress them with a sense of his divine power and goodness.

Now we have the fullest evidence to believe that Christ is near to every disciple, and that he is specially near to those who are in circumstances of anxiety, distress, or danger. When the waters of affliction threaten to overwhelm his friends, he is walking upon the sea, ready to calm the angry surges, and to deliver those who love him, out of all their afflictions. And his simple presence is sufficient to insure this. The disciples, when they recognized him upon the waves, did not call out to him to save them; did not, if we may judge from the narrative given, beseech him to quell the fury of the storm; but they knew that if he was near, they were safe. Had this been his first miracle, they might have had less confidence in him. But only the day before they had gazed upon the wonderful spectacle of the feeding of five thousand men, besides women and children (who probably swelled the multitude to double this number), with food, that at first consisted of but five barley loaves and two small fishes. Having seen that immense crowd, while seated upon the extended plain and surrounding hills, fed by Christ, who, at the outset, invoked the divine blessing upon the few small loaves and fishes that were placed before him, they could no longer doubt, that "all power was given unto him." And all that he deemed it necessary to say to them was: "Be of good cheer, it is I." "You have only to know who it is, to be certain of peace and safety. My presence is mightier

than the storm. Although it is night, the morning of your hopes has dawned upon you. Although the billows rage, yet I hold them in check, and tread them beneath my feet. Although your frail bark is tossed to and fro, I have only to enter it, and it will float in calm waters, and be speedily borne to your destined haven."

And in the precious promises that Jesus makes to all his followers, he deems it sufficient just to assure them of his presence: "Lo, I am with you always;" "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you;" "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And another most tender and affectionate invitation: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." These and other similar utterances all express the idea of simple presence. And in the last passage quoted, this thought is brought to view with peculiar delicacy and beauty. The Saviour will make the effort himself to come to us, as he did to the disciples on the sea. He will stand at the door and knock. He will not intrude himself upon the inmates. He will not force an entrance. He will not even open the door. That must be done by those within. If they hear his voice, and recognize its tones of compassion and love, and open the door to him, he will come in and sup with them. He will not violate any of the rules of courtesy or hospitality. But if there is any prospect of his being admitted, he will stand at the door until his locks are wet with the dews of

the morning. Yes, he will stand there through the whole night, thus cheerfully sacrificing his own ease and comfort.

It is interesting to observe how many of Christ's benevolent deeds were performed in the night time. By night he had the remarkable interview with Nicodemus, and unfolded to him the necessity of Redemption, and the whole scheme of the Atonement. Before selecting his twelve apostles, St. Luke tells us that "he went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." And frequently was this the season for his most earnest supplications.

> "Cold mountains and the midnight air
> Witnessed the fervor of his prayer."

At night he permitted himself to be arrested, and to be carried through the preparatory stages for his crucifixion. In the fourth watch of the night he walked upon the sea. In the night he conquered death and hell, and rose from the dead. But he has now passed into those glorious regions where there is no more night — where no shadows fall upon his pathway — no cold mountains rear their barren and gloomy summits — no dark waters roll, no storms arise — no death chills are experienced.

Yet he is still here, present with every devout and believing spirit. You may not see him with the natural eye, for darkness may surround you. You may not hear his voice above the howl of the storm, but his being invisible is surely no proof of his absence. The mightiest forces in nature, of which

we have any knowledge, are invisible. What is more hidden from the view than the law of gravitation, and yet who does not know that it is the great power that holds worlds in their orbits and systems in their places; and is, I may say, the spirit that pervades the material universe, giving regularity and beauty to these floating orbs around us. The principle of vegetation is invisible; but who will say that it is, on this account, any the less present and potent. Does it not annually clothe the earth with the richest verdure, with beauties that infinitely surpass the skill of the most gifted artist; with flowers, the minute inspection and analysis of which excites the most glowing admiration; with fruits and productions, upon which all conscious life is dependent for its continuance?

You may stand upon a lofty eminence, and view the effects of a wild tempest. You may see the heavy clouds flying rapidly over your head. You may see the forests bending and crushed beneath the blast, — the mighty oaks torn up by the roots, — houses demolished, and their fragments filling the air, and yet you see not the force that is working this ruin. The agent is as invisible as the air in a calm summer's day.

In looking over Christendom, you behold numerous Christian churches, great assemblies gathered for worship, large companies of children listening to the instructions of faithful teachers, and many engaged in carrying from house to house the bread of life and the consolations of religion. You behold a large number of the afflicted supported under their trials,

and submissive to the divine will. You may enter many sick chambers, and see a cheerful serenity resting upon the wasted countenances of the dying, and hear from lips soon to be forever closed, the declaration, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

Now what has wrought all this? We answer, The presence of Jesus. As on the morning of the creation the spirit moved upon the face of the waters, and brought order and beauty out of chaos, so the spirit of Jesus has moved upon the moral world, purifying and elevating the nature of man, restoring to the soul the lost image of its Maker, carrying comfort to the afflicted, hope to the despairing, and salvation to the penitent and believing. And Christ would say to all his disciples, in every age: "Be of good cheer." Though himself a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet the great object of his life was to promote human happiness. In his intercourse with his friends, this end is ever conspicuous. While pronouncing his farewell discourse to his disciples, he said: "Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you." If there was any doubt concerning this fact, if there was any occasion for their being troubled, he would have told them. He came not to deceive mankind, not to encourage in them hopes that would never be realized. He came to bring life and immortality to light, to reveal the will and love of the Father, to throw open the gates of the everlasting city, and to invite all who would repent and believe,

to enter in. A higher mission cannot be conceived. A more glorious service could not be rendered to the human family.

There is, however, another incident in this scene which illustrates the part that we are to perform to secure the aid of the Saviour. When the disciples in the ship, or boat, were assured that it was their Lord who was approaching them, Peter, with his usual promptness, mingled perhaps with rashness, or at least with an undue degree of self-confidence, said: "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water." Perhaps Peter desired to make a display of his courage before the other disciples, or he might have wished to be the first to welcome Jesus. The simple reply that Christ made was, "Come." He was willing to give him an opportunity to test his confidence and faith. At once Peter left the ship, and at first he walked safely upon the water towards his Master. "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me." "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt." While Peter kept his eye fixed upon Christ, he walked firmly and safely. But when he looked down upon the dark and tumultuous waves, he began to sink. His courage failed him, and had not Christ extended his arm to rescue him, he must have perished. What an important lesson are we taught by this event! Our safety, our faith, our hopes, all depend upon fixing our eyes and our affections upon Christ. If we dwell upon the trials and sorrows of

life, or trust to our own strength, we shall fail. With a firm step, with unfaltering confidence, we must look upward to the Saviour. The apostle exhorts us "to lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and to run with patience the race set before us, *looking unto Jesus.*"

# XI.

## THE TRANSFIGURATION.

"JESUS TAKETH PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN HIS BROTHER, AND BRINGETH THEM UP INTO AN HIGH MOUNTAIN APART, AND WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM: AND HIS FACE DID SHINE AS THE SUN, AND HIS RAIMENT WAS WHITE AS THE LIGHT. AND BEHOLD, THERE APPEARED UNTO THEM MOSES AND ELIAS TALKING WITH HIM." — Matthew xvii. 1–3.

IT may seem to be presumption to attempt to analyze and portray the various features of this wonderful scene. Its glories are too dazzling for mortal gaze. Its mysteries are too deep to be penetrated by the human mind. Although the Evangelists have described the scene with vividness, yet probably no one has attained to a just conception of it, except the three favored apostles who witnessed its splendors. We may call to our aid the criticisms of the wise and learned, who have endeavored to unfold its import; we may exercise to the greatest possible extent the powers of the imagination, and yet fall far short of the reality. Like all other supernatural manifestations, it lies beyond the province of human

thought. Yet there are points and lessons in the scene that are full of instruction.

We observe that Christ saw fit to make this remarkable display of his glories to a few select and tried friends, rather than to a large and promiscuous assembly. On no occasion did he manifest a disposition to gratify the curiosity of the multitude, who were ever ready to flock around him. He chose rather to make the most signal manifestations of his power and glory in the presence of those who were prepared to receive from them the greatest spiritual benefit. Even in his public teachings, he did not always explain the import of his parables to the assembly; but reserved this for the few who tarried after the crowd had dispersed, and desired to be more fully enlightened in regard to the truths of religion. Had it been publicly announced that Christ would appear in his divine glory, and receive a visit from Moses and Elijah, thousands would have flocked to the scene, prompted simply by an idle curiosity, while others would have gone to cavil, or to ridicule. After performing some of his most striking miracles, it became necessary for the Saviour to make his escape from those whose malice and hatred were only increased, by every new manifestation of his goodness and power. These enemies, true to the instincts of the depraved heart, had their zeal against Christ quickened in proportion to his efforts to benefit them. Hence he did not care to cast pearls before swine. He preferred to be surrounded by a few honest inquirers after truth, and make his brightest revelations in their presence.

On the occasion of his transfiguration, in order to be as private and undisturbed as possible, he took his companions to the summit of a high and distant mountain. Which mountain was selected, it is difficult for us to determine. Some writers assert that it was Mount Tabor; but there are good reasons for supposing that this opinion is not wellgrounded. It is not material, however, to be able to designate the precise spot upon which the transfiguration took place. We know that the Saviour in his seasons of religious meditation and prayer, or when about to make some signal manifestation of his miraculous power or divine glory, sought a retreat upon one of the mountains of Judea. Besides the retirement which they afforded, he was doubtless attracted by the beauty and grandeur of the scenery that surrounded them; by the remembrance of the wonderful events in the history of God's dealings with his chosen people, which they commemorate; and by the fact that upon their summits he seemed to stand nearer to the eternal throne. He recognized in every mountain a temple consecrated to the service of Jehovah; and while in his solitary retreat, engaged in meditation or prayer, he might hear the mountains breaking forth into singing, and the trees of the field clapping their hands. When he preached his great and memorable sermon, "he went up into a mountain," and as the multitude listened to his sacred truths, uttered with divine eloquence and power, they might well have exclaimed, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace."

From the details given of the transfiguration by the Evangelists, we infer that the scene took place at night. We have already remarked that Christ often chose this season for holy meditation and communion with the Father. When all was hushed in the streets of Jerusalem, and his enemies were sleeping, and the stars were out, heavenly sentinels watching over the innocent and faithful, the echo of his footsteps might be heard as he passed along towards the gates of the city, and sought, alone, his mountain retreats. Under the pale moonlight, his dim form might be seen as he moved over the hills and plains.

Imagine, then, the Saviour with his three disciples, struggling up a distant and rugged mountain, under the shelter of the darkness. Gradually they rise higher and higher, leaving the world and its vanities behind them. The lights of the distant city and villages grow dim, and at last fade away. No sound is heard save the murmuring of the mountain brooks, and the sighing of the winds through the vast forests. They reach the summit, and Christ is about to fulfil the promise made a few days previous, that there were some before him who should "not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom," or glory. We may presume that he gave to his disciples instructions suited to prepare their minds for the wonderful scenes that were to pass before them. From that lofty mountain fervent prayers ascended to the God of heaven, that he would be present with the displays of his power.

Suddenly the disciples were startled by a flood of

light that burst upon the mountain, and filled them with amazement and terror. They turned towards their master, and perceived that his countenance, form, and whole appearance were undergoing the most wonderful changes. The despised Nazarene was emphatically becoming the Lord of glory. He who was without comeliness or beauty, — who was despised and rejected of men, — whose poverty was such that he had not where to lay his head, now appears clothed in splendors too dazzling for mortal vision. His countenance shines with a brilliancy that surpasses the sun. His robes are of snowy whitness, and pure and resplendent as the light. A celestial glory envelops his whole person, — a glory such as he had with the Father before the world was.

And what was equally remarkable, behold there appeared to them at the same time, two mysterious and resplendent beings, Moses and Elijah. They conversed in an audible voice with Jesus concerning "his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." For the trials and anguish of that awful hour they labored to prepare and comfort him. The conflict, though severe, they assured him would be attended with the most glorious results.

While the disciples were absorbed by this scene, a bright cloud floated down and spread upon the mountain, overshadowing the whole group. And amid flashes of lightning and the roar of thunder, a voice was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." So terrible was the sound, that the disciples fell prostrate upon the earth. Jesus, knowing their confusion and ter-

ror, came and touched them, saying, "Rise up and be not afraid." On recovering from their fear, and looking about them, they observed that the heavenly visitants had departed, and that Jesus was alone with them.

In this peculiar and supernatural display of divine power there were, obviously, several important designs.

In the first place, in the voice that proceeded from the cloud, *we have an unanswerable attestation to the divinity of the Messiah.* As though the purity of his life, and the displays of his miraculous power were not enough, we have this direct proof from heaven, that he was the Son of God in whom the Father was well pleased. This testimony was peculiarly appropriate to that period, because erelong the events that would happen to the Saviour, would seriously try the faith of his disciples. They would behold him apparently in the power of his foes. They would see him hurried away by violence; insulted, scourged, and treated as a malefactor. They would hear the sentence of condemnation pronounced against him, and from the cross they would hear his agonizing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." And without the most conclusive evidences of his Messiahship and divinity, they would altogether lose their faith, and abandon his cause. As the sequel showed, these adverse events shook their confidence in their master; but remembering his miracles, teachings, and the supernatural displays of his glory, their faith rallied, and after his ascension their heroism and devotion were such as

could not be surpassed. If they were weak and vascillating in the early part of their career, their subsequent boldness and energy entitle them to the highest praise.

This announcement from the cloud, though made to the three favored ones, was virtually made through them, to all mankind. They stood upon that mount as the representatives of the whole human family. As Moses represented the children of Israel upon Mount Sinai, and Abraham represented all the faithful upon Mount Moriah, and Elijah stood in the place of the believers in the true God upon Mount Carmel, so Peter and his associates represented all for whom Christ came to make an atonement. Whatever was evidence to them of the truth of Christ's doctrines, or the divinity of his person, was evidence to us. There was not a single circumstance in the scenes of the transfiguration, of interest to them, that was not of equal interest to every inhabitant upon the globe. And the Apostle Peter in his second general epistle, when exhorting the friends of Christ to the faithful discharge of their duties, says, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And this voice we heard when we were with him in the holy mount." Now, if we can confide in Peter as a true witness, we must admit his testimony. We must

believe these words as fully and sincerely as he believed them. And in the mouth of three such witnesses as were admitted to the glories of the transfiguration, the great doctrine of the Saviour's divinity should be firmly established.

Another design of this dazzling and sublime manifestation was, *to confirm the faith of believers in a future state of existence.*

If Moses and Elijah actually appeared, (and to doubt this portion of the narrative, is to doubt the truth of the whole,) then we can ask for no more satisfactory proof, than is herein contained of the doctrine of a future state. Here are two distinguished personages, one of whom lived upon the earth fifteen hundred years before, and the other nine hundred years, who appeared in their celestial bodies to Christ and his three disciples. Their resplendent forms illumined the whole mountain. They conversed with Jesus in a language that was understood by his disciples. Their appearance and conversation afforded so much delight that Peter exclaimed, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." He desired to retain the illustrious beings upon the earth, that he might continue to enjoy their society, and listen to their words of wisdom and love. His companions were so filled with awe and astonishment, that they did not give utterance to their feelings. But seeing before them beings directly from the spirit world, and especially those with whose names, history, and achievements they were so familiar, they were thoroughly convinced of the reality and blessed-

ness of the heavenly state. Had they entertained doubts respecting the doctrine of a future state, they must have been by this scene forever banished from their minds. Henceforth all was clear and bright to the eye of faith. They could say confidently with the Psalmist, "In thy presence there is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." They had every stimulus to press forward with new zeal toward the mark for the prize of their high calling. And the church universal should hail with gratitude and rapture, this fresh proof in favor of a future life. For notwithstanding all the light that has been thrown upon this subject, and all the arguments that have been adduced in its favor, it is agitated still in thousands of minds. Different currents of thought rush through the heart, some bearing us towards the regions of light and hope, and others sweeping the soul towards the verge of despair. When we stand upon the mount of faith, we may see in the far distance the Elysian fields, — the shining palaces and temples, — the myriads of bright and holy beings crowding in and out of the gates of the everlasting city, thronging around the eternal throne, and flying through the heavens upon missions of mercy and love. In such an hour the spirit longs to depart, that it may be with Jesus. But when we are in the valley of despondency, moving among the tombs of the dead, and think of the coldness and deep silence of the grave, — of the millions whose forms have mingled with their kindred dust, — of the thick vail that hides the future from our sight, we are tempted to look upon death as an eternal sleep.

"The grave, dread thing!
Men shiver when thou'rt named. Nature appall'd
Shakes off her wonted firmness. Oh! how dark
Thy long extended realms, and rueful wastes,
Where nought but silence reigns, and night, dark night."

To enable us, then, to enter the dark valley with a firm step, and to say, "I will fear no evil," we need the support of every argument that reason, or analogy, or the Scriptures can furnish. We need to stand by the side of Christ at the grave of Lazarus, and see the dead come forth. We need to study and meditate upon the words: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me shall never die." We need to visit the Saviour's tomb, and hear from angel lips the declaration: "He is risen; behold the place where they laid him." We need to stand upon the summit of the holy mount with the apostles, and behold Moses and Elijah, in their resplendent forms, conversing with Jesus. Then we may fully believe that this corruption will put on incorruption, and this mortal be clothed with immortality.

Another feature in this scene is the representation that it furnishes of *the different epochs in the history of the church, and of the coöperation of the glorified saints in the work of man's redemption.* Moses appears to represent the law, Elijah to represent prophecy, and Christ stands as the representative of a new, more spiritual and glorious dispensation. We have brought before us, in a single group, the divine government, in its majesty and authority, the rich promises made to the world of heavenly blessings, and the fulfilment of prophecy. Besides, in the persons

of the apostles we have represented the agencies by which the gospel is to be published to the world. One is to be constituted the rock of the church, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. The others are to bear their testimony to the truth of the gospel; a testimony that will one day be acknowledged by all tribes, nations, and kingdoms of the earth. Thus the past and the future, — heaven and earth, — the church triumphant and the church militant, all meet through their representatives upon the top of that glorious mount. One is signally distinguished from the others, not only by his splendid appearance, but by the supernatural announcement from the cloud: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Though mingling with prophets and glorified saints, he is not to be confounded with them, nor his nature and glorious character to be overlooked.

How delightful to contemplate them as all cooperating in the great work of man's redemption! "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The law and prophecy were both necessary to prepare the way for the reception of the gospel; — the one to aid in bringing mankind into subjection to its requisitions, and the other, to confirm its authority, and support its divine origin, by arguments that could not be overthrown.

We may reasonably believe that God had some special design in the selection that was made of those who should confer with Christ at the time of his transfiguration, and appear to the apostles. For there were no two names that had more influence

over the Jews than Moses and Elijah, or as he is called in the New Testament, Elias. To the former Christ constantly referred in his teachings. He quoted his laws, and made the people understand that if they would not hear Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. On one occasion he said, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" Reference was also frequently made by the Jews to Elias, and the question was put to the Saviour, "Art thou Elias?" When Christ was upon the cross, his persecutors thought that he called for Elias. There was, therefore, a peculiar significancy in the appearance of these illustrious saints upon the mount of transfiguration. They confirmed, beyond all dispute, the claims and teachings of the Saviour. The whole scene proved the unity of the religion of the different portions of the Holy Scriptures; proved that there was one great purpose of mercy running through all the revelations that had been received from the eternal throne in the different ages of the world, — a purpose that commenced with the promise made to Adam, — that was unfolded in the Mosaic dispensation, — seen and acknowledged by the prophets, and fulfilled in the redemption wrought out by the Son of God. And in viewing these great truths that open from this scene, the mount of transfiguration appears clothed with new splendor. In the light that surrounds it, there is a spiritual import. It is the radiance of divine truth. It is glory emanating from

the infinite and eternal mind,—from the great I Am, who is, and was, and ever will be, the unchangeable and almighty Jehovah. We do not wonder that Peter exclaimed, "It is good for us to be here." And may we not ask, if the delight afforded by the presence of two heavenly visitants was so intense, what must be the rapture and glory of mingling with the myriads of holy and celestial beings who crowd God's vast dominions. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

# XII.

## CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN.

"JESUS SAID, SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN, AND FORBID THEM NOT, TO COME UNTO ME: FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." — St. Matthew xix. 14.

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy."
*Wordsworth.*

"What shall preserve thee, beautiful child? —
Keep thee as thou art now? —
Bring thee a spirit undefiled,
At God's pure throne to bow?
The world is but a broken reed,
And life grows early dim: —
Who shall be near thee in thy need
To lead thee up to Him?
He who himself was 'undefiled,'
With him we trust thee, beautiful child."
*Willis.*

THERE is scarcely a scene in the history of Jesus, more touching and significant than that presented by his interview with little children. The fame of his great kindness and benevolence had gone forth, and excited a deep interest among the inhabitants of the country bordering upon the Jordan. Not only were the sick, blind, and lame brought to him, but moth-

ers were seen in the crowd pressing forward towards the Saviour, with their infants and children, anxious that they might receive a blessing. Such was their confidence in the power and goodness of Christ, that they knew, if they could but get near enough to him, that virtue would go forth from him to their children, and the little ones would experience through their whole lives, the rich benefits of his divine blessing. The disciples observing the eagerness of these parents to approach Christ and attract his attention, rebuked them; deeming it an intrusion upon so great a prophet to trouble him with their wants, or even presence of children. They felt that one who possessed such powers as Christ had displayed, and who had come to fulfil so important and sublime a work, could not condescend to notice mere children. But when Christ perceived what his disciples were doing, he was greatly displeased, and at once said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Although he had much to absorb his time and engage his energies, — although he had come to accomplish the great work of redeeming a lost world, — although he was entitled to divine honors, and possessed infinite attributes, yet he was not willing to overlook the interests of the smallest and feeblest child. He had himself been a child, and had experienced the wants, desires, and anxieties of children. Indeed, by passing through the different stages of existence on earth, he was prepared to sympathize with all ages, as well as all classes. By being an infant, he sanctified infancy, and sent forth

an influence that touched and blessed all of this tender age. As a holy child, he set an example to all children, inviting them by his conduct, as well as his words, to follow in his footsteps. As a man, he gave importance and dignity to the whole race. Thus he fulfilled his mission to all, and showed his tender regard for those of every age.

*But there is a profound significancy in this invitation*, that we shall do well to consider.

This act of Christ, simple as it appears, introduced a new era into the world's history. Previous to the advent of the Saviour but little attention had been bestowed upon the intellectual culture or moral welfare of children. As a class they had been either neglected or exposed to the most debasing influences. Paganism taught that it was a virtue for the mother to sacrifice her offspring to idols, cast her child into the Ganges, or leave it exposed to the fury of wild beasts. Even among civilized nations, the rights of children were but little respected. It was a custom with the ancient Romans at the birth of a child, for the father to decide whether it should be reared, or be left in the street, and abandoned to its fate. In the decision that was made, the mother could take no part. Besides the power that the father had over the life of his children, he could three times sell his son, and three times reclaim him, and appropriate to himself all his child's gains. Under the emperors, however, the power of the father was somewhat reduced, and the condition of children was slightly improved. Among the Spartans, the celebrated Lycurgus, who was recalled to the head of the govern-

ment for the purpose of reforming the state, required that only the vigorous and well-formed children should be preserved, while others should be at once exposed in the wilds of Mount Taygetus. The slight value that was put upon the lives of children by wicked princes in the time of our Saviour, is shown in the decree issued by Herod, requiring the indiscriminate slaughter of "all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under." In the wars, too, of that period, children shared the fate of the conquered army. Neither their innocence, weakness, or claims upon sympathy and justice, afforded them any protection against the relentless foe.

But the Divine Teacher appears and establishes a new doctrine respecting children, a doctrine that bears the impress of his divine benevolence and infinite compassion. Beholding the mothers pressing towards him, he extends an invitation, twice repeated, in order to give to it the greater intensity: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." As though he had said: "Do not, on any account, prevent the little children from coming to me and receiving my blessing. For it is a part of my mission to do good to these little ones. I have come from heaven to be the child's teacher, the child's Saviour, —the child's guide to happiness and glory. I was once myself a child, and experience has prepared me to sympathize with this class in all their trials and interests. Nor can we fail to observe, that the recognition of the rights and the power of children is a distinctive feature of the Christian dispensation. In

exact proportion to the power of the gospel over any community, we find the interests of children protected, and their moral culture promoted. Systems of education are framed and established. Family religion is instituted. The infant child is solemnly consecrated to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He is early taught to lisp the name of Jesus. His young heart is thrilled with the story of the babe in Bethlehem, the flight into Egypt, the cruelty of Herod, and the exciting incidents connected with the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Sabbath schools are formed to perpetuate the Saviour's kind invitation to children. They constitute so many gateways leading towards the celestial city, where Christ now sitteth at the right hand of God. They serve to perpetuate the memory of Christ's love for children, as the celebration of the last supper perpetuates the memory of his sufferings and death. These Sabbath schools may be regarded also as evidences of the divine origin of the Christian system; for none but a heaven-born system could create such an institution. No other could prompt to such benevolent effort, self-denial, and zeal, as are often manifested by those who are engaged in teaching the young, and bringing back wandering children to their father's house. Nor is there a more interesting spectacle on earth than a large and prosperous Sabbath school, with officers and teachers imbued with the spirit of Christ, and the pupils eager for the treasures of divine knowledge. As an exhibition of the voluntary system, — of the outgoings of benevolent effort, without the expectation of reward here, it

is one of the most beautiful that could be presented. Literally, the gospel is furnished here without money and without price. Literally, the invitation is given, Whosoever will, let him come and partake of the waters of life freely. In such a school, impressions are every Sabbath made that will endure long after the pyramids have crumbled, and the stars have faded from the heavens. Through the destitute children gathered here, streams of influence go forth and reach multitudes of families. Many a child has been a missionary to the family of which he was a member. Many a one has carried the riches of salvation to his home, and been a preacher of righteousness to parents, brothers, and sisters.

The Saviour, also, by taking little children in his arms and blessing them, recognized the importance of early religious culture as a force by which to advance his kingdom. He knew that if he gained the children, his cause was safe, and that he would gain the world. He knew that if his doctrines were desposited, as seed, in the mind of a child, they would grow with his growth and strengthen with his strength. And the opinion is rapidly gaining ground, as the light of Christianity increases and extends, that all the great interests of society, the progress of civilization, liberty, and humanity, and the spiritual hopes of the world, are involved in the early training of children. If we desire any important truth or cause to triumph, let it be planted in youthful minds, and become entwined around the sympathies of the heart, and flow in the channels of early thought, and it will gather a force that can be obtained in no other

way. It will become a part of the very existence of the generation with which it is thus connected. It will give form and character to the institutions of society, civil, social, and religious, as far as the influence of its advocates extends.

It is specially true of all religious systems, whether founded in error or truth, that their chief force lies in early culture. Such is the strength of the religious affections, — so much is man a religious being, with all his irreligion, that even a superstitious and grossly erroneous system will retain its power and wield a mighty influence, if it has the advantage of an early culture. Let one enter a Pagan country, and, after surveying the degradation and ignorance of the people, their cruel rites, their deceit, treachery, and misery, and the power of a corrupt priesthood, let him inquire for the secret force that produces this state of things, and he will find it in the groups of little children that are led by their mothers into the heathen temples, and taught to bow the knee before a hideous idol. If a child, say a little girl, is more than others actuated by religious sentiments, she will be found frequently bringing in her tiny hand offerings to lay upon the altar, — will often pray to the false deities whom she has been taught to reverence, and subject herself to bodily pains and severe privations. As heathenism offers to her the only channels through which her religious affections can flow, she accepts them, and the system thus engrafted in her nature, and connected with her earliest experience and thoughts, abides with her, and controls her to the hour of death. The gospel missionary may go to a

people thus trained, and he will effect comparatively but little with the adult population. If he would have hopes of success, — if he would move the giant fabric of superstition that surrounds him, he must commence with a new generation. He must establish schools, — he must deposit the seeds of divine truth in the minds of children, — must suffer little children to come to Jesus and learn of him; — then will the wilderness of heathenism and the solitary place be made glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose.

So with the Romish superstition, its force is derived from early culture. Though transplanted to this land, where the fruits of Protestantism, as an element of civilization, cannot fail to be seen, yet it retains its hold upon the masses of its victims. Though these papists have the opportunity of seeing what a free system of education, republican institutions, and a pure faith can do for even the social interests of a people; though they have the opportunity of contrasting this land with their own, in point of intelligence, wealth, comfort, and power, yet they will cling to the system that has left its blight upon their native soil, and been the chief cause of their past sufferings. And not only so, but they will violently oppose the Protestant system, the blessings of which they have come hither to share. They would, under the guidance of their teachers, tear down the very fabric that affords them shelter. They are taught by their priests to shun Protestantism as they would a pestilence, and yet they come and ask Protestantism to protect them against famine, pesti

lence, and the various social evils that in their own land could not be endured. A strange spectacle, a marvellous wonder this; and yet it illustrates the power of early instruction. It shows the influence of principles when planted in the mind while that mind is in its plastic state, though the principles are erroneous, and are as hostile to one's temporal as to his spiritual good.

Now let this force of early culture be rightly directed; let parents bring their children to Jesus, to receive his blessing and instructions, and a moral power would be created that would be felt throughout Christendom. A generation would be raised up that would defend the principles of the gospel against all opposition, break the power of the "man of sin," dissipate the darkness of heathenism, and roll in upon the nations the light of divine truth and the blessing of a pure and holy religion.

The latter clause of the Saviour's declaration, is also worthy of our attention. He desired the children to be brought to him, because "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Their presence reminded him of his Father's house, — of the pure and bright spirits that surround the eternal throne.

Some have argued, that Christ in this language, only designed to convey the idea that those who were like infants in innocence, purity, and confidence, would be admitted to the kingdom of heaven.

The ancient Jews entertained the opinion, that only those infants that were circumcised were saved, while the children of the Gentiles perished. The Papal church, up to the time of the Reformation, en-

tertained the belief that baptism was essential to the salvation of infants. Ecclesiastics being themselves excluded from domestic life, felt but little interest in the welfare of children, and very readily adopted and advocated this opinion. Being aware that it would add greatly to the influence of their church, and induce multitudes of parents to seek her communion, that their children might be baptized, they were ready to make it an article of faith. Nor has there been any change among Romanists, on this point, since the Reformation. Their bigotry, ignorance, and hostility towards all who differ from them, lead them still to cling to it. The Puseyites also agree with the Papist in this particular. "Without baptism," say the Oxford tracts, "none can enter the kingdom of heaven." That the rite of baptism is an important and divine rite, — as the seal of God's covenant with his church, — as a mark of his peculiar favor towards the children of believers, and as a form of parental dedication of infants to the service of the Most High, we fully believe. But to make it essential to salvation, or that, according to the book of common prayer, it has in it a regenerating efficacy, are opinions to which we cannot subscribe.

The Calvinists have often been charged with involving this question in obscurity, and maintaining the doctrine that only the baptized infants of believers were saved. But on examining the historical argument, we find that they were the first to advance liberal views upon the subject. Zuinglius first announced the doctrine that all infants are saved. He argued that they were not guilty of actual transgres-

sion, — that being ignorant of the divine law, and without the capacity of understanding it, they were not capable of violating it, and hence were not subject to the penalty. Baptism, he maintained, rather recognized than conferred religious privileges, and had no power to make the distinction in the other world, for which many contended. Indeed, it is to the zeal of this and other Calvinistic writers, that the various evangelical denominations have been led to adopt the opinion that all who die in infancy are saved. While the Romanists, the Oxford divines, and those who agree with them, cling to their bigoted and cruel dogma, that the vast majority of infants are lost, the enlightened, liberal, evangelical portion of the church are united in the opinion that of such, literally, is the kingdom of Heaven.

In the vision which the Apostle John had of the heavenly world, when he beheld around the throne a great multitude which no man could number, we have reason to believe, that the vast throng was increased by millions of infant spirits, and that he heard in the celestial choirs a chorus of infant voices. When we call to mind how large a number of those who die in middle life or at an advanced age are unfit for the kingdom of heaven, when we look over the world and survey the ravages of sin, and observe in how many forms iniquity abounds, and how many bright hopes are blasted, the sadness of the picture is alleviated by the thought, that a multitude, which no man can number, have, in the dawn of existence, escaped the sorrows and miseries of life, and safely reached their homes in the skies.

And could we withdraw the veil, and be endowed with the vision which was granted to the Apostle John, we should see this happy company surrounded by angels, — walking in the avenues of the celestial paradise, — their powers developing and expanding in the genial and holy atmosphere of heaven. We should behold the blessed Saviour worshipped by a vast throng, whose infant voices swell the anthems of praise that ascribe to him glory, honor, immortality, and power.

# XIII.

## INTERVIEW WITH THE RICH YOUNG MAN.

"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" — St. Mark x. 17.

It is interesting to observe with what facility Christ adapts his teachings to all classes in society. While his instructions contain fundamental principles that are of universal application, he gives to them, according to the occasion or circumstances that call them forth, a personal bearing, which not only adds to their force, but gives to his system of truth a variety suited to every age and condition in life. The rich and the poor, the prince and the beggar, the learned and the ignorant, the aged and the young, may alike study the records of his life and instructions, and receive spiritual knowledge adapted to their case. Truly may Christ be denominated the Great Physician, who is not only familiar with every moral disease, but who has a remedy for every malady to which human nature is exposed.

In the case of the young ruler, who came to Christ to know what he must do "to inherit eternal life," there are several points of peculiar interest and of practical importance.

*In the first place he exhibited traits of character that excited the interest and love of the Saviour.* He had evidently enjoyed the advantages of an early religious culture, and was familiar with the principles and requisitions of the Jewish faith. With those principles he had endeavored to make his life correspond. He was a man of integrity, honest in his dealings, courteous in his deportment, and rigid in the performance of many religious duties. He possessed many amiable qualities, was kind, affable, and lovely. Though his character evidently partook of the self-righteousness that prevailed so extensively among the Pharisees at that period, yet we have no reason to believe that there was any hypocrisy in his conduct. Had there been, Jesus, who knew the hearts of all men, would not have looked upon him with so much complacency and affection. His frank bearing, his respectful manner, the earnestness with which he addressed the Saviour, won his confidence and love.

Nor did Christ underrate his morality and good works. Indeed, his first reply to the question of the young ruler was in these words, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Although the full meaning and spiritual import of these words were not fully understood, yet as far as the young man had gone, his course met with approbation. Occupying a position of authority, and possessing immense wealth, the temptations that surrounded

him were peculiarly great. Affluence and power often try men's souls, more than poverty and obscurity. Yet in such circumstances, the young ruler had maintained an upright character and an amiable disposition.

Nor have we any warrant from the Scriptures to undervalue good works, and traits of character such as were manifested on this occasion. Although they have not power to save the soul, and cannot take the place of a vital faith, yet they are the essential accompaniments of genuine religion. They may exist without vital godliness; but vital godliness cannot exist without them. It was never the design of the Gospel to abrogate the law. Christ came to fulfil the law; to render it honorable; to reinstate in the human soul the authority of the commandments. He said to his disciples, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." In all his instructions, he never lost sight of holy obedience as an essential element of true piety. Formalism, or dependence upon an outward profession, whether under the ancient dispensation, or under the Gospel, were equally his abhorrence.

We sometimes meet with characters, professedly Christian, that practically repudiate good works and amiable qualities. So much zeal is manifested in the defence of the faith once delivered to the saints, that little remains to produce its fruits. While certain formulas of doctrine are insisted upon with vehemence, and clung to with tenacity, the great duties that one owes to society and to God are overlooked.

Now it is evident from the life and instructions of Christ, that he regarded the chief force of one's influence as lying in a holy character. He would have sound doctrine established in the intellect, but he would have it there that it might be developed in the life, and create an example that would lead others to glorify our Father who is in heaven.

The next point to be noticed is, *the state of mind* with which this young ruler approached Christ.

It is evident that he was earnestly desirous of securing the salvation of his soul. We are informed that he came running to Jesus, as though he was not willing that the opportunity afforded of having an interview with him, should pass by unimproved. He had listened to Christ's teachings, and perhaps witnessed some of his miracles. His interest in the Messiah may have been gradually awakened, and his mind may have passed through various struggles between the claims of this world, and the rewards of eternity, before he brought himself to the point of going directly to the Saviour. We can hardly suppose, considering his circumstances and the position that he occupied, and the feelings which the Jews generally entertained towards the despised Nazarene, that this step was taken suddenly, or without long premeditation. If Nicodemus thought it necessary to visit Christ by night, in order to avoid the suspicion of being favorable to his cause, and if the public sentiment was indicated by the inquiry, "Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on him?" we must suppose that the boldness and earnestness of this young ruler were prompted by strong

feelings, and by ardent desires to obtain eternal life. Besides, he approached Christ with the greatest reverence and humility. He kneeled before him in the presence of his disciples, and of the spectators who stood around. Thus he publicly bore testimony to the confidence that he placed in the Great Teacher, and in the truth of his instructions. In addressing him, he said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" The Saviour perceiving the precise state of the inquirer's mind, and the meaning which he attached to the title which he had addressed to him, instead of giving an immediate answer, endeavored to direct his attention to the source of infinite goodness, and persuade him to free his mind from the spirit of self-righteousness which he shared in common with the Jews at that day. He wished to establish in the young ruler just conceptions of the divine character, as the only true basis upon which he could build his religious hopes. If the idea was entertained that a created being or a prophet had power to impart salvation, the Saviour wished to expel such an idea from the mind. On another occasion he would doubtless have admitted this title that was addressed to him, but he had a special reason for the comments that he made upon it at this time.

In the convictions and feelings of this young ruler, we recognize the moral state of a large number of intelligent and upright persons in the nominally Christian world. This class are intellectually convinced of the truth of the Gospel dispensation. They perceive the beauties and excellences of the

doctrines that Christ taught, — the necessity of a divine revelation to instruct man in regard to his duty and his destiny; and the need of heavenly light to guide us in our journeyings towards eternity. In their hours of meditation, or in the stillness of night, when the very silence fills the mind with solemnity, and the stars declare the perfections and glory of God, an influence gathers around the heart that urges them to go to the Saviour, and learn of him what they shall do to inherit eternal life. On the Sabbath, in the midst of sanctuary services, when God's truth is before the conscience, and worldly interests are low in the scale of one's estimation, there are strong desires to be prepared for the hazards of eternity. The reason and judgment, as well as the feelings of the heart, are on the side of truth and righteousness.

Indeed, that heart must be sadly destitute of sensibility that cannot at times be moved by the exhibitions of divine love, and the various means that God is employing to bless and save the world. That mind must be under a fearful paralysis that cannot at times, in the midst of great mercies or terrible judgments, send its thoughts forward to explore the future. The great facts connected with our being, leaving out of view a divine revelation, — the certainty of death, the possibility of a future life, and that momentous consequences may be connected with our conduct here, — are enough to fill any heart with emotion, and any mind with profound anxiety.

But we have reason to apprehend that the analogy between this class of persons and the young ruler

holds true in other points, beside the one we have considered.

The inquirer, having replied with great readiness to the question put to him respecting the commandments, said, "What lack I yet?" He felt probably that his morality in the several particulars specified, was sufficient to secure his salvation. But to put the matter beyond all doubt, he proposed this question, "What lack I yet?" The Saviour, impressed by his frankness and earnestness, gazed upon him with emotions of tender compassion. Reading his heart, and knowing just what barriers he must break through in order to obtain light and hope, he said to him, "One thing thou lackest." "If thou wilt be perfect, go thy way, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." In this language we see that Christ comes directly to the point in the case. The proposition which he makes is clear and searching. To some it may seem harsh and unnecessarily severe. But it simply contains, in an intense form, the great principle upon which the gospel scheme had been from the commencement promulgated, — the principle that the law of benevolence must be the supreme law of the soul, — that love to God and to our neighbor must be the highest affection of the regenerate heart. The same truth is brought out in the declarations: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon;" "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross." And if we will narrowly scrutinize the principle for a moment, we shall see, that instead of be-

ing severe or arbitrary, it is the only principle by which the great purposes of redemption can be secured. For no other would have force enough to purge the soul of selfishness, and restore to the mind the lost image of its Maker. No other would be adequate to the work of breaking up the giant systems of evil in the world, and reorganizing society upon the broad basis of justice and right. No other would be capable of uniting the soul to God in the bonds of everlasting love. No other would afford any warrant that "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" would survive the obstacles and difficulties that would be encountered, and be carried forward to a triumphant consummation. Suppose that Christ had demanded but a partial surrendering of the affections and services of his followers to himself; suppose that he had made proclamation, that it was possible to serve God and mammon, what efficacy would there have been in his system? Every heart that he claimed would have been a divided empire, and his cause would, at best, have had but a feeble support. Besides, according to the laws of mind, there can be, at the same time, but one supreme object of pursuit. The attention may be divided between different objects, but one must rule the affections and energies of the soul. When these objects come in conflict, the less, in one's estimation, must yield to the greater. If love to God is the supreme affection, then every thing must bow to this. If avarice, or ambition, or vice, is in the ascendency, then the sovereignty of this principle is asserted over every other interest. In some cases, the specific acts under dif-

ferent supreme purposes may appear to draw very near to the line that divides the territory of benevolence from that of selfishness; as, for example, a man's morality may be so rigid and his virtues so praiseworthy, as to almost seem to touch the line that defines the boundary of religious principle. But, after all, it is the nature of a man's ruling purpose that decides his character; and the Saviour saw, that while the young ruler had many amiable qualities and many virtues, and was indeed lovely, that still the principle of avarice was upon the throne of his heart. He sought, therefore, at once to dethrone that principle. The honor of God, the success of his cause, and the highest welfare of the young ruler, demanded it. Its destruction was absolutely essential to a thorough work of grace in his soul. With the benevolent principle in the ascendency, the work of sanctification could advance; the Holy Spirit could take up his abode in the soul, and render it a temple of the living God. Every Christian grace would flourish, and the fruits of the Spirit would be experienced — love, peace, and joy. The full force of the man's energies and life would be given to the cause of truth, and to the sublime work of the world's redemption. Had the proposition been acceded to, the name of that young ruler might have come down to us surrounded by holy influences, and carrying with it a sacred power into the circles of wealth, refinement, and authority. It might have ranked with the names of St. Paul and St. John, and have grown with the growth, and extended with the extension of Christianity.

Besides, infinite blessings were offered as a reward for the sacrifice. "Thou shalt have treasure in heaven," said the Saviour. The joys and glories of an immortal state would be his portion. He would be admitted to a participation in honors and pleasures that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor even the heart of man conceived.

But how was the rich young man affected by the proposition? Alas, with mingled astonishment and sadness he listened to these words from the lips of the Great Teacher. Troubled in spirit, anxious to obtain eternal life, and yet unwilling to give up his great possessions, he turned his back upon the Saviour and went away. Nor do we learn that he ever returned again. Blinded by the glitter of worldly riches, and fascinated by the transient pleasures which they procured for him, he preferred them to immortal treasures. Though he had been admitted to an interview with the King of kings, and Lord of lords; though he had the pledge of eternal life from him whose name is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace;" though he might have united his interests to him who was to be exalted far above all principalities and powers, yet with a sorrowing heart he returned to the beggarly elements of this world. After having stood, as it were, in the gateway of the everlasting city, he turned his back upon its palaces and temples, and voluntarily clung to treasures that at best could afford him but a superficial and temporary happiness.

In his dying moments with what emotions must

the decision of this hour have been regarded! How rapid the change in the comparative value of earthly and heavenly treasures! How the world sinks, viewed from the verge of the future life! How eternity rises! We cannot but suppose that in that solemn hour, this proposition must have stood out with fearful prominence before his mind. His great possessions he must now leave, whether he will or not. Had he consecrated them upon the altar of benevolence, he might, as it were, carry them with him, and been received by the supreme King with the welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." But that wealth to him now is a mere wreck. It cannot keep him from sinking in the dark waters of death. It cannot comfort him. He may leave it in legacies to the destitute, but that will be but a poor substitute for a life of earnest benevolence and devoted piety. I apprehend that the Supreme Being does not look with any special complacency upon that charity that only comes from a man with his dying breath. Certainly the element of self-denial does not enter into it. Benevolent societies may sometimes be the gainers, but what Christ demands is the services and charities of living, and not dying men. Besides, one great purpose of charity is, that the donor may himself be blessed. While the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the Deity cannot be dependent upon the legacies or gifts of any of his creatures.

Let us turn *to notice the comments which Christ made upon this scene*, to the spectators who witnessed it. He availed himself of the occasion to show how

hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. In explaining his words to his disciples, he assures them that what is impossible with men is possible with God; that divine grace is sufficient to overcome the power of avarice. Yet he would impress them with the great danger of the soul's being ensnared and destroyed by the riches of this world. The instance which had just passed before them was a melancholy illustration of the power of avarice in holding a mind in its grasp that was enlightened in regard to its duty, and convinced of the necessity of making vigorous efforts to secure eternal life. Nor is the danger from this source confined to those, who, like this rich young man, have great possessions. Judas, without wealth, fell before the power of the same principle. The poor man, as well as the rich man, may be under the dominion of covetousness. The principle is the same, whether the field for its operation is large or small. And here, mainly, is the battle ground upon which the spiritual interests of the soul are decided. The great struggle in Christendom, and wherever the light of divine truth has excited inquiry and reflection, is between God on the one hand, and mammon on the other. Mammon, or wealth, standing as the representative of worldly good, presses its claims, while God, the representative and source of infinite blessings, urges his demands upon our supreme affections. The former appeals to the outward senses, the latter to the spiritual nature. The former deals with the inclinations and carnal desires, the latter with conscience and duty. The former covers

only the interests of time, the latter spreads over eternity. The former is limited and transient, the latter infinite and imperishable.

Upon this battle ground we all stand. In every heart one of these principles is supreme. There is no neutrality here. The nature of mind, the nature of Christianity, the nature of God forbid it. He who is not for me, said Christ, is against me.

The highest form of the principle of benevolence is presented to us in the life of the Great Teacher himself. He not only for our sakes became poor, but he gave all that one being could give for the benefit of others, gave his life, submitted to a most cruel and ignominious death. Hence Christianity is the very essence of benevolence, and in this lies its force. This constitutes it the reformatory power of the world.

Christ dwells also upon the abundant and glorious rewards that accrue to those who give up all to his cause. In reply to a question put to him by Peter, he said, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother . . . . for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." That this cause should be attended with glorious results in the future life, is what we might naturally expect; but that it will yield an hundred-fold more happiness in this life than the opposite course, is, to many, a very strange doctrine. Yet we have the authority of Christ for its truth. The approbation of conscience; the knowledge that we are in the path of duty, and are living for the purest and highest purposes; the divine com-

munications imparted to the soul; the peace of God that passeth all understanding; the clear and bright visions of future felicity, will afford an hundred fold more happiness than the wealth and honors of this world. The apostles experienced the truth of this even in the midst of persecution. St. Paul speaks of himself as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

# XIV.

## THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

"He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth."— St. John xi. 43, 44.

In the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus, all are personally interested. If its truth can be substantiated, — if the evidences upon which it rests are such as cannot be overthrown, then it furnishes a most important ground of hope and of faith. For the question of questions to every thoughtful mind is, "If a man die, shall he live again?" When the breath leaves the body, and all this complicated and nicely adjusted machinery ceases to act, and the form lies cold, silent, and unconscious, the inquiry will force itself upon us, is this the end of man's existence? Is the principle of vitality never to reanimate this form, but eternal darkness and solitude to be its portion? Nor does the frequency of death lessen the anxiety to fathom its mysteries, or detract from the profound solemnity of the event. Though the countless millions of past generations have been

swept from the stage of life; though every hour of these revolving days and years, the king of terrors numbers his victims, yet death to each individual is as solemn and mysterious an event, as if he alone was subject to its power. The thought of leaving the world never to return, — of closing our eyes upon the sunlight, upon the beauties of the earth's scenery, and lying down in the darkness and silence of the tomb, — the sad consciousness of parting with kind friends, and all that has rendered life dear and attractive, — the fact that the untried scenes of eternity are so near, are calculated to excite the deepest emotions of the soul. As the shadows of death fall upon the spirit, the dying man strains his vision to discern some rays of light in the regions beyond the dark valley. He involuntarily pleads for some assurance that death is not an eternal sleep, that this sinking away of consciousness is not final and irrecoverable. In the midst of his gloom and perplexities, Christ appears before him with the evidences that he has power over the grave, that he is mightier than death, that he can dissipate its sadness, solve its dark mysteries, and make the scenes beyond brighter and more glorious than any that have been witnessed on earth. He can point to the raising of Lazarus, as proof that he has power to summon the millions from their graves, and reanimate the mouldering forms that lie scattered over the islands and continents of the earth, and are buried in the caverns of the deep.

This miracle, having so intimate a bearing upon our personal hopes, is worthy of examination in its

various details and connecting circumstances. Our blessed Lord, while prosecuting his labors in Judea, formed a warm attachment for a family, consisting of a brother and two sisters, residing in Bethany, a village situated at the foot of the Mount of Olives, about two miles from Jerusalem. He had often experienced their hospitality and shared in their kind attentions. In the midst of his trials and hardships, it was truly refreshing to his spirit to commune with this pious family, receive their affectionate sympathy, and witness the evidences of their faith and love. On their part, they esteemed it the greatest privilege and honor to entertain the Saviour, and to contribute in any way to his comfort. They believed in him as the long promised Messiah, as the Teacher sent from God, as the Son of the Most High. They naturally took the most intense delight in his society, and in listening to the words of heavenly wisdom and love which fell from his lips.

We deem it, under any circumstances, a source of pleasure and profit to converse with the wise and good; to obtain through animated and friendly conversation the benefit of their varied and critical studies, their profound meditations, and their experience in years of virtuous and benevolent action. But how far transcending the advantages of all human intercourse, was the privilege of sitting down in the quietness and security of a Christian family, and conversing with him who possessed infinite knowledge; in whom dwelt all the riches of heavenly wisdom, whose love for the human race was like a fathomless, shoreless ocean. We may, in imagination, picture

before our minds this interesting group, with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, proposing questions to their illustrious guest touching the interests of the soul and the realities of the immortal state. As he discourses upon the great doctrines of his system of truth, — as he presents clearly to their minds his own nature and character, — the sublimity and glory of the work which he had come to achieve; — especially as he described to them the blessedness, holiness, and felicity of heaven, their attention is naturally riveted to his words, and their souls filled with the most intense excitement and enrapturing emotions. If Christ was so ready, in his journeyings through Judea, to instruct the ignorant and to reason with even the sceptical and those who were opposed to him, we must suppose that in a pious family like this, where he found an anxiety to receive instruction, that there was a richness, fervor, eloquence, and celestial glow to his teachings that far surpass our most vivid conceptions. We must suppose that every new interview that this favored family had with their guest, increased their delight in his instructions, their enthusiastic admiration for his character, and their affection for him as a warm personal friend.

Any of us would regard it as an inestimable privilege thus to sit down and listen to the instructions of him who was the very embodiment of all truth, knowledge, wisdom, and love! To hear him discourse of life and immortality, — to receive from him clear and absolute knowledge upon points that have perplexed and saddened us, — to have him clear away the mists of error and the doubts that have

overshadowed our faith, and enable us to look beyond the valley of death, and discern the beauties and glories of the heavenly state, would indeed be the highest felicity! One hour of such conversation with the Lord of glory would afford more distinct and impressive views of theological truth, and more stimulus to press forward for the immortal prizes that are held out to the Christian, than all the writings of philosophers and the treasures of human learning.

We cannot wonder that between this family and the blessed Messiah a close and affectionate intimacy was formed. But like all other Christians during their earthly pilgrimage, the happiness of this family was subject to the vicissitudes and sorrows of life. While Jesus was in Perea, about a day's journey from Bethany, Lazarus was taken sick, and a messenger was sent to acquaint the Saviour of the fact. Several motives may have influenced the sisters in doing this. They may have supposed that Christ would naturally desire to see his friend, who had thus been suddenly prostrated by a severe attack of sickness. Or if Lazarus was about to die, they would wish to have Christ near to administer to him the consolations of religion, and quicken his hopes of future and immortal happiness. Or, such was their confidence in the power of the Saviour, they supposed that if he were present, he would heal their brother; for Martha said to him when they met, "if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But Christ, to comfort the sisters, sent back this reply, although its import was not at that time obvious. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the

glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." When these words reached them, they were doubtless greatly soothed; although the word death is equivalent to the phrase "remaining under death," and does not necessarily imply that Lazarus should not die. But their comfort is of short duration, for on the very evening probably that the messengers returned, Lazarus died.

Here was, indeed, a most severe trial to the faith of the pious sisters. In the midst of their deep sorrows they had sent for their spiritual guide and instructor, and he had not come to them. Although they had sent the tender message, "Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick," yet the affection which he had manifested towards their brother, had not drawn him to the scene. The promise, too, that he made, seemed to be broken; and thus in the very hour when they most needed sympathy, they were deprived of it. What conflicting feelings must have agitated their minds as they thought of the words of Christ, and then looked upon the cold, lifeless form of their departed brother! How many inquiries and temptations must have been presented by the scene through which they were passing! Is it possible, they ask, that we have been deceived by him whom we have entertained with so much pleasure, and listened to with such admiration? Or does he lack the power of arresting the progress of disease and saving human life? Or has he become so much interested in others as to have lost his friendship for us? Their perplexity and sorrow were, as we may well imagine, most intense.

The body is prepared for burial; the hour for the last solemn rites is appointed; the mourners assemble; the procession, with all the marks of profound sorrow, moves towards the tomb; the corpse is laid away in its cold, silent resting-place; the sisters return to their desolate home, and yet through all, no Messiah appears to comfort them.

How frequently have Christians in affliction been placed in circumstances similar to these, when a dark and impenetrable cloud hung over all their earthly prospects; when their supports one after another give way, and their faith in any good is put to the severest test!

But, from the narrative of St. John, it appears, that Christ was by no means indifferent to the sorrows of his bereaved friends, nor ignorant of what was transpiring in Bethany. After two days had elapsed from the time he heard of Lazarus' sickness, he proposed to return to Judea. But his disciples, astonished and alarmed at the proposition, said to him: "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" They were fearful that some calamity might befall him, and they thought that the least they could do was to keep out of the way of danger. Christ, in replying to them, labored to strengthen their courage, and to show that if they walked in the light and strove to fulfil their duty, they had nothing to fear. He then tells them why he desires to go: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may wake him out of sleep." The disciples not understanding his meaning, said: "If he sleep, he shall do well," assigning this as an addi-

tional reason why their Master should not expose himself to such imminent danger. Then Jesus said plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him." He would gladly, for the sake of the afflicted family, have been with them, and saved them from the severe anguish which they had been called to suffer. But as far as the disciples were concerned, he was glad of the opportunity of increasing their faith by a display of his miraculous power, such as they had not before witnessed. And although he would run great hazard in returning to a region where the people were so excited and enraged against him, yet his purpose is formed to go to Bethany. His affection for the pious family that had so hospitably entertained him, his desire to increase the faith and stimulate the zeal of his beloved disciples, and his anxiety to furnish a proof of the doctrine of the resurrection that would impress his followers in all nations and ages of the world, were sufficient motives to induce him to encounter whatever obstacles might impede his progress. It is most interesting thus to see the love and energy of the Saviour raising his spirit above the influence of adverse circumstances, fortifying him for every emergency, and prompting him to press forward for the accomplishment of his great and sublime work. When his purpose was fully known, Thomas said to his fellow disciples: "Let us also go, that we may die with him." "Let us share his trials and dangers, and, if necessary, sacrifice our lives in his cause. For it is better to die with such a Master

than to live without the consolations and spiritual benefits which he alone can impart."

The tidings of Christ's approach to Bethany reached Martha first, and she went forth to meet him, while Mary remained in the house overwhelmed with grief. At the sight of her Saviour, Martha's affection and confidence returned. She said to him, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha said to him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." The words that follow from the lips of the Saviour, are among the most precious, sublime, and thrilling that are to be found in the sacred volume. They should be engraved as with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond, upon every pious heart. They should be inscribed in golden letters upon every Christian temple. They should be meditated upon at all times, and under all circumstances, in the house and by the way, when we go out and when we come in. They should increase our faith, stimulate our hopes, and fire our zeal. They should be recited for the consolation of the afflicted, to enable such to reflect with composure upon the departure of beloved friends, and cherish the hope of a reunion in a purer and brighter state of being. They should be uttered in the hearing of the dying saint, that as dark shadows are falling upon his earthly prospects, he may be cheered by the dawning brightness of an eternal day. Listen, then, to them, and fathom if you can their sublime and glorious import.

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me *shall never die!*" And the inquiry following, which Christ put to Martha, he would with emphasis address to every thinking, immortal being, *Believest thou this?* The great question to us all,—one that involves the highest, mightiest interests of the soul!

After this conversation, in which thus incidentally was brought out this great truth, Martha hastened to Mary, and secretly said to her, "The master is come, and calleth for thee." She quickly arose and went to him; and her Jewish friends who had called to comfort her, followed her out of the house, supposing that she was going to the grave to weep there. When she came to the place where Jesus was, she was overwhelmed with the deepest emotion; and, falling down at his feet, she said, "if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." The Saviour observing her and her friends in tears, was moved by the scene, and the Evangelist informs us that "Jesus wept." In this short verse, the shortest in the Bible, there is condensed a fulness and richness of meaning that carries comfort and sympathy to every afflicted soul. Although the Saviour knew that he was soon to turn this sorrow into joy; although he was conscious of possessing a power mightier than death, yet such was the tenderness of his nature, and the strength of his affections and sympathies, that he could not refrain from giving vent to his feelings. And his example on this occa-

sion, affords us a warrant to mourn over the loss of dear friends, and to weep at the graves of those we love. It was never the design of the gospel to blunt the sensibilities of the soul, or to suppress the natural feelings of the heart in seasons of bereavement. It comes rather to regulate and soothe these feelings, to lead the sorrowful to the divine fountain of sympathy and consolation. It comes to relieve the darkness of the grave with the soft light of a celestial and immortal state. It comes not to destroy affliction, but to cause it to work out for the Christian a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

The company having arrived at the tomb, Jesus ordered the stone to be removed from the entrance. A distinguished divine remarks, that "Our Lord could with perfect ease have commanded the stone to roll away of itself, without employing any to remove it; but he judiciously avoided all unnecessary pomp and parade, and mingled all the majesty of this astonishing miracle with the most amiable modesty and simplicity." The stone having been removed, and a prayer of thanksgiving offered to heaven, Jesus "cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him and let him go." With the particulars respecting the mode of preparing the dead for burial at that time, and the manner in which Lazarus raised himself up in the sepulchre, we need not concern ourselves; as they are fully ex-

plained in the writings of commentators and theologians. It is in the great fact of the resurrection of Lazarus that we are interested; and after a careful examination of the evidences connected with the miracle, we are free to affirm, that all the circumstances conspire to substantiate its credibility. The fact that the deceased had been dead four days, so that Martha feared that the decay of the body might have already commenced, when it was proposed to roll away the stone from the sepulchre; the absence of Christ at the time of the death and burial; the large number of persons who witnessed the miracle the impossibility of deceit or jugglery having been practised under such circumstances; the express declaration of Christ to his disciples, that Lazarus was dead; and other facts, prove that the credibility of this event is placed beyond all reasonable dispute. We are warranted in recognizing in it the assurance, that the same being who wrought this miracle, has power to call the slumbering millions of our race from their graves. Lazarus appears and walks forth as a proof that the king of terrors may be conquered, and that those who sincerely believe in Jesus will hear his voice and come forth to share in the blessings of eternal life.

# XV.

## THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY.

"On the next day, much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna; blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord." — St. John xii. 12, 13.

Although the fame of Christ, and especially the raising of Lazarus, awakened the jealousy and rage of the Pharisees, yet among the masses of the people they excited the most intense enthusiasm. The thousands of people who were flocking to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover, found that the wonderful miracles which Christ had wrought were everywhere the topic of conversation. In the houses and streets of the city; amid the throngs that stood about the temple; at the gates, and in the neighboring villages, it was evident that a profound sensation had been produced. Multitudes rushed to Bethany to learn the particulars respecting the raising of Lazarus, and to confirm with their own eyes the reports which they

had heard. Some were actuated by curiosity to behold a man who, after having been dead and in the grave four days, was now living and mingling as usual with his family and friends. Others were desirous of beholding the remarkable person about whom they had heard so much, and who possessed the extraordinary power of calling the dead to life.

Under such circumstances, it was natural that the friends of Christ should desire to make some public demonstration of their respect and reverence for so illustrious a personage. Nor was the Messiah himself unwilling to yield on this occasion to the enthusiasm of the people. He felt that the time had come for making a public acknowledgment of his claims as the king of the Jews, — as the founder of a new and spiritual empire, — even the kingdom of God in the earth. He knew, indeed, that the triumph would be short, that the songs and shouts of the people would soon be silenced, and that some who were the most forward in celebrating his praises, might soon raise the cry, "crucify him." While in the select circle of his bosom friends and disciples, his character and mission were to a great extent understood, yet the great multitude of the people were ignorant of the extent of his claims, and the nature of his kingdom. In order, therefore, to enlighten their minds, and to silence all objections that might in the future be made against him for not having come out openly, and with sufficient distinctness to impress the popular mind, he consented to make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We can readily see that it was a question of vast importance to decide, to what

extent Christ should make a demonstration of his miraculous power, unfold his system of truth, and reveal his purposes and claims. He had so many elements and phases of human depravity to deal with, such a variety of opinions and doubts to encounter, and so delicate a task to remove an ancient dispensation that was a divine institution, but had expended its force; that it was a very nice point to decide what course to pursue to meet the emergencies which daily arose. If he, on all occasions, came out with the utmost plainness and fearlessness, the prejudices of the people might be too strongly excited against him, and his life might be destroyed before the great work of unfolding his system and furnishing the best evidences of its truth, was accomplished. If, on the other hand, he was too obscure in his utterances, and retired in his habits, he might fail to reach the multitude, and gain them over to his cause. Hence, the greatest wisdom was necessary in all his movements and teachings, that he might accomplish his purposes, and at the same time adapt himself to the circumstances and wants of the people. And we find that this wisdom was displayed on all occasions, though it was not always attended with success, as Christ once told the people, after an attempt to instruct them, "But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children, sitting in the markets and calling unto their fellows and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of

man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children." All the wise and truly good will see the design of this variety, and its adaptation to promote the glory of God and the salvation of men.

On many occasions, when the people had become greatly excited, Christ retired from them, and left them to return to their homes to meditate upon the scenes that they had witnessed, and the truths they had heard. But on his departure from Bethany to go to Jerusalem at this time, he allowed his disciples and the host that had gathered in the village to accompany him. On their way, an ass's colt was provided upon which Jesus rode, thus rendering his person more conspicuous to the people, and fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah, "Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy king cometh sitting on an ass's colt." We need not suppose that among the oriental nations any idea of degradation or humiliation was attached to a person's riding upon such animals, they being larger and more beautiful than those that are with us. In distinction from horses that were used in war and in military celebrations, this animal, selected by Christ, was the emblem of peace, and was used by kings and princes upon great occasions. The patriarchs and judges did not deem it disgraceful to ride upon them, as is seen in the cases of Abraham, Moses, and the Jair's family, recorded in the ancient Scriptures.

The people, to show their reverence, threw their loose mantles upon the colt upon which Jesus sat;

and as he rode along he was escorted with the honors of royalty, and demonstrations of the most enthusiastic admiration. Multitudes spread their garments along the road, thus making a continuous carpet for the illustrious prince to ride upon. Others cut branches from the trees, and gathered flowers and strewed them in the way; which was the mode of expressing the public joy at the arrival of a distinguished king.

The motives that actuated many in the crowd, may have been of a mixed, and of a secular character. Some may have joined the company simply from love of excitement. Others may have supposed that the reign of Christ as a temporal prince, would now commence, and that on reaching Jerusalem he would proclaim and vindicate his title to the throne of Israel. They expected that he would pronounce, perhaps under the shadow of the temple, an inaugural address, such as never fell upon mortal ears; and that he would make a demonstration of his divine power, that would convince all the inhabitants of the city, and the vast throngs of strangers that were gathered within its walls, that he was their rightful sovereign. But, erroneous as may have been the views of some, there were many who were influenced by pure and even spiritual motives, — many who believed that the long promised Messiah had come. They recognized in the person of Jesus, him of whom prophets had spoken, of whom the Psalmist David had sung, and for whose reception the nations had been, for thousands of years, in a course of preparation. Their hearts were filled with

gratitude, that such a teacher and prince from the royal courts above had condescended to visit the earth, mingle with sinful men, and open before them life and immortality. Their spirits were fired with zeal to bestow the highest honors upon their great Master. They desired that all the world might share in the blessings he had to bestow, — that his spiritual sovereignty might be established, and his reign become universal. Nor can this spectacle be otherwise than refreshing to every true disciple of Jesus. It is certainly an immense relief to turn from the scenes of toil, sorrow, and anguish, through which we are so often called to follow the Messiah, and behold him receiving the honors due to his heavenly character and exalted station. We rejoice to see even for a short season, the dark clouds that have so long surrounded his pathway breaking away, and the light flashing in upon him. We rejoice that he can for once, at least, hear praises instead of threats, and be followed by a band who seek to honor and not to destroy him. The shout of that multitude falls as music upon our ears. Their outburst of admiration comes to us as an indication that the cause of this illustrious, wonderful being, is not hopeless, and that the sensibilities of mankind are not entirely deadened.

When the procession reached the descent of the Mount of Olives, they were met by a crowd of people, who having come up to celebrate the feast from Galilee and the neighboring countries, had been informed that the Messiah was approaching the city. Without waiting for him to come within the gates,

they rushed forth to gain a sight of him, and to join in the demonstration of respect and honor which was being made. After a momentary pause, occasioned by the meeting of two such tides of living beings, and the inquiries that were made by the strangers respecting the truth of reports concerning the resurrection of Lazarus, the multitude moved on again with increased enthusiasm and augmented strength. They now took branches of palm trees, which were usually carried before heroes in a public triumph, and bore them high in the air in honor of the Prince of Peace. While the shouts of many in the far distance were rending the air, from the lips of others was heard that beautiful and noble anthem, taken from the Psalms of David, "Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." Never before did the surrounding mountains and the walls and towers of the city echo such a song! Never did the earth witness a triumph so full of intense meaning and glorious results! For the hero comes not from the smoke of battle, and fields of slaughter. No piles of the slain, — no smouldering cities, — no crippled empires, — no chained captives form the background of this scene. The conqueror comes from the arena of moral victories. He has grappled with temptation, — with the various forms of human wickedness, — with principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world. He has maintained his integrity in the midst of a perverse and corrupt generation. He has overcome malice by kindness, hatred by love, cursing by blessing. He has estab-

lished a spiritual kingdom that is antagonistic to every species of wickedness, that protests against all wrong and injustice, that is destined to rescue man from the ruins of the fall, reëstablish the authority of the divine government, and guide the nations to happiness and glory.

As the living stream poured along and drew near the gates of the city, the whole multitude of the disciples who had, in times past, felt restrained, by fear of the Jews, from expressing publicly their admiration for the Messiah, now believed that the long desired moment had arrived for giving vent to their affections and emotions. The scene around them recalled the many acts of kindness which the Saviour had performed, the various and wonderful miracles which he had wrought, and the numerous instances when he deserved a demonstration of public gratitude similar to this. They began, therefore, "to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen;" "and cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." Then the vast throngs joined in a mighty chorus, and all expressed in the loudest and fullest manner their homage for the great King. They no longer feared the enemies of the Messiah. They no longer heeded the warnings of the government and the threats of priests and Pharisees. They knew that their leader, who had proved his power to raise the dead, could defend them against any foes, against even the combined armies of the world. If the gates of the city should

be shut against them; if the Roman forces should be gathered and ordered to obstruct their progress, they were confident that the foe would be instantly overcome, and the gates of the city forced open. The enthusiasm of the hour and the grandeur of the occasion might have reminded them of those sublime words of the Psalmist: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory."

From the conduct of the disciples on this occasion, the followers of Christ in all ages may derive a lesson of practical importance. They may learn the necessity and the obligation that they are under to publicly make known their attachment to Christ. Though the vast majority of the earth's inhabitants may be too much immersed in the cares and vanities of life to heed the claims of the Messiah; though the proud and self-righteous may deem his doctrines too humiliating for their acceptance; though the learned may prefer reason to faith, and their philosophical speculations to a revealed system of moral truth, yet those who have felt the love of Christ in their hearts, and experienced the blessedness of his instructions, and of the great salvation which he has provided, should be willing to make a public acknowledgment of their gratitude and their indebtedness to the Messiah. If we have secured the pearl of great price, shall we hide the treasure from the gaze of others? If we have become the sons of God, shall we refuse to acknowledge our spiritual parentage? If we are

the candidates for heavenly honors, and the heirs of an everlasting kingdom, shall we be ashamed of our prospects and our inheritance? Let the words of Christ be remembered, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." On that grand triumphal occasion, in which the Father, the Son, and the holy angels will participate, the splendors of which will be more dazzling than the sun, and all the glories of the material universe; an occasion, compared with which the scene before us is but a passing shadow, multitudes will desire most intensely to join the throngs, and unite in the anthem, Hosanna to the son of David. But having in this world been ashamed of Christ, and having feared the ridicule of scoffers and the threats of the enemies of Jesus, he will, on that glorious day, be ashamed of them. It is a law of Christ's kingdom, that those who would reign with him in the future, must suffer with him in the present life. If one would share in the honors of a heavenly triumph, he must first pass through the dangers and struggles of the battle field, and thus have his valor and faith tested, and those moral qualities developed, that will fit him for the services and joys of a higher state of being.

As the vast throng pressed through the gates of the city, there was one body whom their shouts struck with deep consternation. The sanhedrim had resolved that this worker of miracles, whose fame was so rapidly spreading over Judea, should perish. They had even gone so far as to give public notice,

that if any one knew where Christ was, he should make it known to the proper authorities, that he might be apprehended. Yet, notwithstanding this order had been issued, the people had risen up in mass, and were paying royal honors to the object of the rulers' malice and hatred. He whom they supposed had hidden himself away in some obscure cave or dark thicket, to escape the vigilance of the officers of government, was at that moment entering the city, riding at the head of a triumphal and enthusiastic procession, whose songs and shouts were ringing through the streets of the ancient metropolis, and echoing among the mountains that are round about Jerusalem. In their amazement and fear, the members of the sanhedrim scarcely know what course to pursue. They would gladly seize him, who in broad daylight is riding through the streets. But they dread the popular commotion that would follow so rash a measure. The fear of the people held them back, as it had done on former occasions. They were obliged, therefore, to sit and listen to the swelling and stirring song: "Hosanna, blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord."

But there were some Pharisees who mingled in the crowd, and watched, with feelings of contempt and fear, the unusual spectacle before them. Probably they were attracted partly by curiosity, and partly by a desire to stop a movement which, in their estimation, was the offspring of fanaticism. Having tried in vain other means to check the rolling tide and silence the multitude, they at last went to Jesus, and said to him: "Master, rebuke thy disciples."

'Put an end to this unlawful demonstration and these seditious speeches, that endanger the state and disturb the public peace. Stop this excessive rejoicing and these songs of praise, and such high honors as only the most illustrious heroes should receive." Jesus, turning upon them, replied: "I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." If, after such demonstrations of power, and such a career as he had passed through, the hearts of men were not moved, and strong emotions were not stirred within them, the very stones and other inanimate objects would become vocal with his praises. For such an exhibition of power and wisdom and love, the world had never before witnessed, and probably would never again witness. As there is but one sun in the heavens, so there is but one Saviour of mankind; but one, the light of whose example is brilliant and powerful enough to fill the whole earth.

The Pharisees having listened to Christ's reply, "said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world has gone after him." They felt that the tide of popular favor was too high for them to restrain it by their personal opposition, or by the decrees of the sanhedrim. They must wait for the waves to be rolled back by forces or influences that were not within their control. Nor was it long before the surges began to recede, and other cries were heard, though it is not so clear, as some have supposed, that they came from the same multitude.

The hero and his mighty train having entered the city, the inhabitants were greatly excited, and came

forth from their houses and from the marts of business, and inquired, "Who is this," that comes with so much pomp and such demonstrations of joy? The multitude replied, This is Jesus, the illustrious prophet, the fame of whose mighty deeds and sublime virtues is filling the world. Having reached the temple, and there again exerted his miraculous power in healing the blind and the lame, the very children took up the song and sung, "Hosanna to the Son of David." At this the displeasure of the chief priests and scribes was greatly increased. They were apparently shocked at what they had heard, and in astonishment they asked Jesus, "Hearest thou what these say?" Is it right or proper that these children should apply such language to so humble and obscure a person as yourself? Jesus said unto them, "Have ye never read" in the Psalms of David, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." If the words of prophecy were fulfilled in their hearing, they need not wonder nor complain. If, too, they were resolved to be silent, and to be insensible of the virtues and achievements of the Messiah, God might see fit to use even feeble instruments to express the praises of his beloved Son. And the condescension of the Saviour appears in his readiness to accept the tribute from these little worshippers. Doubtless the tones of those sweet voices lingered long in his ear, and mitigated the sorrow of those tragical scenes which soon followed this joyful triumph.

"What are those soul-reviving strains
Which echo thus from Salem's plains?

What anthems loud, and louder still,
So sweetly sound from Zion's hill?

Lo! 'tis an infant chorus sings,
Hosanna to the King of kings:
The Saviour comes!—and babes proclaim
Salvation, sent in Jesus' name.

"Nor these alone their voice shall raise,
For we will join this song of praise;
Still Israel's children forward press
To hail the Lord their righteousness.

"Proclaim, hosannas loud and clear;
See David's Son and Lord appear!
All praise on earth to him be given,
And glory shout through highest heaven!"

# XVI.

## CHRIST WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM.

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace: but now they are hid from thine eyes."—St. Luke xix. 41, 42.

It was prophesied that the Messiah would be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: but there were some circumstances which filled him with deep anguish; an anguish that found vent only through his tears. The intensity of his feelings at such times, no human mind can realize. Indeed, much of his inner life, and of the workings of his benevolent heart and earnest soul, were hid from mortal view. No eye could read the burning thoughts and deep emotions that were in the sacred breast of the Saviour of mankind. He viewed the world and its interests, man and his destiny, from a stand-point which no finite being can reach. In his survey of this theatre of human action and human responsibility, he took in a range of interests and consequences such as none but an infinite mind could

grasp. He saw in their fulness and solemnity the relations that man sustains to his Maker. He knew the nature and value of the human soul; knew its capabilities to advance in knowledge and virtue, and its susceptibility to happiness or misery. He could see down the long track of eternity. Its splendid palaces and its gloomy prisons; its celestial songs and joys; and the smoke of those fires that are never quenched, were every hour full in his view. He could trace the results of holiness or sin, infinitely further than the most profound and far reaching of created beings. Hence, every word that he uttered, and every action that he performed, were fraught with a meaning which baffled human comprehension. His teachings contain volumes of truth, the seals of which have not yet been broken. It is true there is much that is plain; but there is more that is obscure. Light breaks in upon us from his sublime utterances; but what is known compared with the unknown, is like what we see of the starry heavens, compared with the invisible glories beyond. These bright points that we call stars, are not the universe of the infinite God; neither are the few doctrines that we gather from Christ's lips, the whole of the great system of moral truth.

When, too, the Son of God weeps, there is a profound meaning in his tears. There is a depth to his sorrow that we cannot fathom. No ordinary calamity draws forth his tears. No temporary evil causes his sacred bosom to heave with emotion. When he wept at the grave of Lazarus, he doubtless had before his vision all the tombs that were upon the earth.

He saw the dead of many generations sleeping in their silent resting-places. The funeral processions of four thousand years passed in review before him. The weeping sisters who were in the group represented the mourners of all ages. They stood in the place of a vast multitude whose hearts had been broken. And Jesus wept, as the thought pressed upon him that he was in a world over which death reigned; that the busy millions who had crowded this planet had been swept before the great destroyer, and that all the living were travelling towards the same dark, dark valley.

As he approached Jerusalem, and reached an eminence that overlooked the city, a thousand associations and feelings rushed upon his mind. The very name of the city was significant, and was connected with all that is sacred in the religious history of God's chosen people. As he gazed upon the metropolis reposing in its beauty and magnificence amid the mountains, he thought of the extraordinary events and wonderful displays of divine power, of which it had been the theatre. He recognized in it the dwelling-place of Jehovah; the spot selected for the visible manifestation of the divine presence among men. He thought of the illustrious kings who had occupied its palaces; of the tribes that from the surrounding regions had come up to worship; of the prophets, who had within its walls enjoyed bright visions and enrapturing views of the heavenly world. He remembered the songs that David had sung, and his vivid and eloquent descriptions of the favored city. He would gladly have repeated the Psalmist's

exclamation: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion." He would gladly have responded to the call, "Walk about Zion, tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following." He would gladly have continued to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," and to have echoed the benediction, "Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces."

But he could not exult over the city; for he thought of the sins and guilt of her inhabitants, who had been so highly blessed by heaven. He called to mind the fact that they had killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto them. His own person they had treated with contempt. The mighty miracles which he wrought within the city made no salutary impression upon their minds. His teachings they despised; his doctrines they rejected. "He came unto his own, but his own received him not." Yet that city he loved with a devotion that never abated. We find him lingering around it, and seeking to instruct and save its inhabitants, notwithstanding their ingratitude and wickedness. He could say from the heart with the captive Jew, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." And as expressive of his intense love, we hear him exclaiming, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." He desired above every thing else to protect them from the im-

pending storm. He desired to see their hearts purified; the veil of hypocrisy torn from them; their useless formalities broken up, and the temple filled with sincere and devout worshippers. But, alas, they were about to fill up the measure of their iniquity by crucifying the Lord of glory; and he foresaw the terrible doom that awaited the city. In imagination he saw the armies of Titus marching against it, to slay its inhabitants. He saw their tents pitched, and the siege commenced, that proved so destructive to human life within the walls. He saw the fearful attack of the enemy; the walls crumbling; the strongest fortifications giving way; the palaces, and the glorious temple itself, wrapped in flames. He saw the frantic inhabitants rushing from house to house, in the vain attempt to escape from their enemies. He saw in imagination the streets through which he had often walked, covered with blood, and he heard the cries of agony from the suffering and the dying. The whole scene was pictured before his mind as a reality, and hence his tears. Hence his grief, which no language can express, and no finite mind conceive.

Nor was it simply the temporal ruin that was to befall the city which excited his sorrow. He saw calamities beyond the burning of palaces and the death of the body. While weeping, he said, "If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." They possessed the sacred oracles, and had every opportunity for becoming acquainted with the divine character, laws, and government.

Repeated messages from the eternal throne had been sent to them. They had received supernatural evidences of the divine favor. The writings of Moses and the prophets were read in the hearing of all the people. It would seem as though the sweet Psalms of David would have softened their hearts, purified their lives, and elevated their conceptions of religious truth. Under the guidance of his inspired pen, they might have been led into green pastures, and beside the still waters of salvation. They might, with him, have taken delight in the law of the Lord, and have meditated day and night upon the sublime precepts which had been given by the supreme legislator of the universe. They might, under his teachings, have studied the heavens, and heard the very stars declare the glory of God. They might have made the Lord their rock and their fortress; their high tower, safe from the invasions of every enemy. They had the assurance, that as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about them that fear him.

The sublime and glowing prophecies of Isaiah were enough to kindle the ardor and sustain the religious faith of the nation. Often they heard his soul-stirring cry, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city." Often those who had wandered from the faith of their fathers heard the invitation: "Come now, let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Whatever there was in these ancient writings, sub-

lime in doctrine, beautiful in poetic imagery, elevating in lofty thought, and true grandeur of style,—whatever there was sacred in truths that had come from Jehovah, were so many distinct and powerful attractions to bind the Jews to the true religion. The temple itself was an enduring monument of the divine favor. It stood before the people, the pledge that there were other temples and another Jerusalem and a higher worship, to which they should aspire.

Besides, they enjoyed the personal presence and instructions of the Lord of glory. They watched his footsteps; gazed upon his benignant countenance; heard the words of heavenly wisdom and love as they dropped from his lips; and almost felt the beatings of his sympathizing heart. We have the records of his life, but they had the life itself. We have reports of his discourses, but they listened to his divine eloquence, heard the melody of his voice, and witnessed the glow, fervor, and earnestness with which he unfolded the great doctrines of life and immortality. We have the testimony that he "went about doing good;" but they experienced his acts of charity, his tender regard for the afflicted, his compassion for the penitent. We have heard of the wonderful display of his miraculous power, but they saw the sick healed, the blind receiving their sight, the lepers restored, and the dead raised to life. They saw the glorious attributes of the Deity shining through his life. They had the living Shekinah, God manifest in the flesh.

Yet, notwithstanding these great spiritual advantages, they did not know the things that belonged

unto their peace. They knew them intellectually, but they did not reach their hearts, and regulate their conduct. Their pride, in being so highly distinguished above other nations, destroyed all spirituality in their devotions. Faith degenerated into mere superstition. Worship became a round of formal rites and useless ceremonies. So apparent was their formalism, and so gross was their hypocrisy, that the Saviour, with all his kindness and compassion, could not at times restrain his indignation. "Woe unto you," said he, "scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widow's houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. Ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. Ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess." And in contrast with this, when the Saviour thought of the moral elevation that they might have reached, and the character for piety, charity, and faith, that they might, under such advantages, have secured, he was filled with the deepest sorrow. He wept over the city, exclaiming, "if thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!" If they had but meditated upon their career! if they had but realized whither their madness was carrying them! But they were rushing with fearful rapidity towards the brink of destruction. They knew not what pertained to their peace. Their minds and hearts were swayed by tumultuous passions, and carnal desires. They were making no preparation for that glorious rest that remaineth for

the people of God. The Prince of Peace was among them, but they rejected his claims, despised his offers of mercy, and were plotting his destruction. With the treasures of divine truth scattered in their pathway, they clung to the grossest errors and most fatal superstitions. With the gates of heaven open, and with the Son of God pointing them to mansions in the skies, they prefer to walk the downward road that leadeth unto death.

To the Saviour's exclamation he adds the words of fearful import, "but now they are hid from thine eyes." Though surrounded by celestial light, the guilty inhabitants of Jerusalem were virtually in the depths of moral darkness. They had so far blinded their eyes, perverted their consciences, and hardened their hearts, that they neither perceived nor felt the influence of the great truths which had been revealed to them. Their day of grace was passed. They had gone beyond the limits of divine forbearance. God had dealt with them in mercy and in judgment. He had warned, exhorted, entreated, but all to no purpose. Their harvest time was now passed, the summer of their hope was ended. "If our Gospel be hid," said the apostle, "it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." A more fearful state can scarcely be imagined, than that of a mind that has once been enlightened, and enjoyed high spiritual advantages, and afterwards blinded by the god of this world. It is as though the sunlight

should gradually be withdrawn from the earth, and the mantle of a perpetual darkness be thrown over the objects of beauty and sublimity that constitute the charm and grandeur of the world's scenery. How appalling it would be to the inhabitants of this globe, as they saw at the close of a certain day the sun sinking below the horizon, to be assured that it would never rise again; that the night upon which they were entering would be without a morn! How fearful the consequences of such a calamity! How terrible the gloom as days, weeks, and months roll on, and yet no light! The marts of business are gradually hushed, and deep silence reigns through the streets. Trees and flowers droop, and vegetation begins to decay. The ships rot at the wharves, and their falling spars and masts sound like the knell of universal death. The most crowded cities become vast cemeteries. Death stares all in the face, and one after another the inhabitants drop, until the race becomes entirely extinct.

But, great as would be such a calamity, what is it compared with the fading away of the Sun of Righteousness, from a city whose benighted inhabitants would never again see its light! What is the loss of ships, and merchandise, and earthly cities, compared with the loss of moral faculties and immortal hopes and heavenly joys! What is physical darkness, compared with the darkness occasioned by the hiding of God's countenance, and the final withdrawal of all the means of grace!

The subsequent conduct of the infatuated Jews showed how completely their minds were blinded.

When the Saviour had been arrested, and they were standing before the judgment hall, how fearful was the imprecation they invoked, when they cried, "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" How little did they realize the fearful import of those words! How little did they think that the terrible imprecation would be fulfilled to the very letter, — that the inhabitants of the guilty city would themselves be crucified by hundreds, and their children be scattered, and become a hissing and a byword among all nations! Nothing but the most complete moral blindness could have allowed them to pursue a course fraught with so much peril and guilt. Had they but listened to the teachings of the Saviour, and learnt who it was concerning whom they cried, "Away with him, let him be crucified," they would have shrunk back with infinite horror from the deed. They would have hailed him as their king, loaded him with honors, prostrated themselves at his feet, and rendered to him divine worship. But their malice and hypocrisy were so intense, their base passions raged with such fury, that they could not stop to weigh evidence, or listen to argument, or compare the words of prophecy with the life and teachings of the Messiah.

This marked instance of spiritual blindness, with its appalling consequences, brings to our view a principle in the dealings of Divine Providence, of great moment. It is the limitation connected with the means of grace, as expressed in the declaration: "My spirit shall not always strive with man." The Supreme Ruler, in dealing with disobedient and way-

ward subjects, may send to them gracious messages, and display to them his mercy; but there are limits to those messages and to that mercy. Truths resisted are, after a reasonable season, withdrawn. Motives may press to-day to the exercise of repentance and faith, but to-morrow their influence may not be felt. If the God of neaven is excluded from the soul, the god of this world will enter in, and blind the minds of those that believe not. Such is the nature of mind, that it must have some supreme law, and some supreme object of affection. And it should need no argument to prove the superiority of the divine law over every other. It should need no argument to prove, that the only suitable object of our highest affections is the infinite Jehovah. For what else in the wide universe can satisfy the longings of an immortal spirit? What other being can sustain us in seasons of deep trial and oppressive gloom? To whom else can we look as we enter the dark valley of the shadow of death? Who but the omnipotent and infinitely benevolent God can furnish the soul with happiness through the ages of eternity! O to be able to say, "this God is our God," is the highest blessing conceivable! It includes all that can be imagined or desired. It includes crowns, kingdoms, mansions, and all that is honorable and glorious in the royal courts above; includes the treasures of knowledge for the intellect; sympathy and love for the heart; holiness for the spirit, and boundless enjoyment for the soul. The height, depth, length, and breadth of this blessing, no finite mind can measure.

The grand object of Christ's advent was, to restore man to his allegiance to his Maker. For this he toiled, suffered, and died. For this he taught in the streets of Jerusalem, and worked his miracles, and performed his deeds of charity. But that city was too far sunk in iniquity to be recovered. Its inhabitants had wandered too far from truth and duty to be brought back.

# XVII.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE LAST JUDGMENT.

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set his sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." — St. Matthew xxv. 31–33.

We have in these and the following passages, a description of the last judgment, given by the Judge himself. Although, at the time of their utterance, Christ was in circumstances of humiliation and sorrow, yet he predicted that the day would come when the Son of man would appear in his glory, attended by all the holy angels, and would take his seat upon the throne of the universe. Before him would be gathered the countless millions of all ranks and conditions of men, who have trod upon this planet, and acted their part upon this theatre of human life. Those that sleep in the quiet churchyard; those who have fallen upon the battle field; the multitudes who rest in the coral caverns of the ocean, will, at the

sound of the last trump, come forth. At the same moment "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light; the stars shall fall;" "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works therein, shall be burnt up." St. John, while an exile upon the wild and barren isle of Patmos, had a vision of the judgment scene, which he thus describes: "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it; from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

In entering upon this theme, I confess that my mind is oppressed with a deep feeling of awe and solemnity. The greatness of the occasion that will assemble the whole human family before such a tribunal, — the fearful majesty and power of the great Judge, — the hopes and fears that will agitate millions of hearts, — the tremendous results of the decisions of that day, viewed only in imagination, hang as an awful cloud over my spirit. If there is but a possibility, that from that cloud the thunders of divine wrath may one day be heard, and the lightning flash of God's indignation strike the offender, that possibility is enough to solemnize and awaken anxiety in every mind. O, if there is a subject in reference to which we would ask with earnestness, "What is truth?" is it with regard to the transactions and

results of the judgment-day? For this day brings before us the crisis in our existence; the point towards which the influence of every thought, word, and deed tends, and from which will date the fixed character and eternal destiny of every soul.

The answer to the question which we have proposed, is alone to be found in the teachings of him who has declared himself to be "the way, the truth, and the life." It is in vain to depend upon reason, or philosophy, or any system of human ethics or theology. We must accept the authority of him who came into the world, "to bear witness unto the truth." And he has affirmed that he will come in his glory, attended with the insignia and messengers of his power, to judge the world, and to render to every man according to his deeds.

In meditating upon this day, let us consider, *in the first place, the necessity of its appointment.* This necessity grows out of the relations that fallen man sustains to his Maker. Having violated the laws of the divine moral government, and incurred the displeasure of an infinitely holy and benevolent Deity, it becomes necessary that the transgressor should be summoned before a suitable tribunal, to answer for the wrongs of which he has been guilty. In conceiving of any system of government established over sentient beings, we naturally include the judicial element as essential to its harmony and perfection. Laws must not only be framed and promulgated, but they must be enforced upon the principles of right and justice. A human government without tribunals before which to bring the offender, and

without an executive force to maintain the laws, would be virtually no government. Civilized society, in order to maintain order and perpetuate its civilization, must have certain established principles of action, to which the subjects of government must conform. This is obviously essential to the comfort and happiness of the community. And what is necessary in order to attain the ends of the social compact in every nation, even the smallest upon the earth, is much more necessary in a kingdom that stretches over millions of worlds, and includes within its boundaries countless multitudes of thinking and responsible beings. If a human government cannot exist without its judiciary department, much more cannot the divine government, which is so intimately connected with the stability of God's throne, the glory of his character, and the welfare and happiness of all his moral creatures. The Almighty does not sit upon his throne simply to give advice to his subjects. He has not framed a government merely to make a show of authority before his moral creation. He does not unfold to us the great purposes of his administration, with the design of one day abandoning those purposes, and allowing them to come to naught. Reason as well as revelation teaches us, that the purposes of an infinitely wise and holy Being must be fulfilled,—that his authority and throne must be sustained, though the heavens and the earth pass away. Let the authority of Jehovah be in any way impaired, or let him fail of enforcing his laws, and the great ends for which he has created a moral kingdom will be sooner or later

defeated. These ends are his own highest glory, and the supreme happiness of his creatures, and one is just as dependent for its accomplishment, upon obedience, as the other.

Many may think that the laws of God are arbitrary, and are unnecessarily rigid and severe. But instead of being arbitrary, they grow necessarily out of the nature and constitution of a moral kingdom. Were there no King upon the throne of heaven, and were these worlds and their inhabitants to continue in their present condition, there would be the same necessity that there now is for the moral laws which have been instituted for our government; for without them order and happiness could not be maintained for a single day.

It is true that the divine government is now administered over us, under an economy of grace. It is true that the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily. But justice may be suspended without being annihilated. God may, through the atoning sacrifice which Christ has made, show mercy. He may, in the plenitude of his love, make offers of pardon to those who have rebelled against him, on the condition that they exercise repentance and faith. But there are a multitude of passages in the holy Scriptures, which warn men against being deluded by the idea, that, because God is a being of compassion and longsuffering, therefore justice and judgment are not the habitation of his throne. It is true that infinite mercy is an element of his character. It is true that he has sworn, as he lives, that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather

that they should turn and live. Indeed, he is represented with the warmth and earnestness of an affectionate father, as calling after his wayward children, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die." In the parable of the prodigal son, we have a most striking and vivid representation of the feelings of Jehovah, towards those who have wandered from him. Though they return to him poor, naked, destitute, and in want of all things, he is ready to receive them, to embrace them, to rejoice over their return, to place at their disposal the riches of his kingdom. Yet he cannot and will not compromise a single principle which lies at the basis of his moral system. Those principles are as immutable as his own character, and eternal as his throne.

We would in the next place inquire into the manner in which the examinations of the judgment-day will be conducted, and the principles which will constitute the basis of its decisions. The Scriptures inform us that "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." Also, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." By this language, we are taught that the thoughts and motives, as well as the external acts, will pass under the inspection of the omniscient eye. Every thing that affects, or relates to the character, will be an object of examination, and its bearings upon the soul's destiny, will be seen by the individual, as well as by the Judge. Nor will it be so difficult to bring the events and thoughts of a long life under review, as some may suppose. For in this life we know that the mind, under certain cir-

cumstances, as for instance, under the apprehension of sudden death, is wonderfully quickened; and numerous instances have occurred where the power of the memory was so great, as to bring before one in a most vivid light, the whole of his past life. A drowning person, who has afterwards been resuscitated, has experienced this in a most remarkable manner. Event has followed event with the rapidity of lightning. Even those that had long been forgotten, come before the mind with as much freshness, as though they had occurred but yesterday. Many persons, who have lived in a state of alienation from God, having stifled convictions of duty, and despised the doctrines and precepts of the Christian faith, have, with the prospect of death before them, felt in anticipation the tremendous pressure of the transactions of the judgment-day. With conscience as the accuser, and the wicked deeds of a wasted life as witnesses, and the reason as the judge, and the light of eternity breaking in upon the character, the sinner has been forced to look at the evidence, and almost hear the dread sentence pronounced against him. And if in this life the mind can become so quickened, as to recall with such rapidity the events and deeds of the past, how much more will its powers be increased, when it becomes disengaged from the body, and moves in a spiritual sphere, where all the influences tend to stimulate it to the most intense action.

But independently of the capabilities of the memory, an Almighty being has the power of bringing instantly before each subject a history of the past

life that will enter into the minutest details, and bring to light all the motives, feelings, and purposes, of which the individual has ever been conscious. He who created the human intellect is familiar with all the avenues that lead to it, and with all the springs and chords of association that are connected with the memory and consciousness; so that he can easily bring every work into judgment with every secret thing.

But not only will the character undergo a careful inspection, but also all the influences and circumstances that have contributed to its formation. The condition in childhood and youth, the early bias given to the mind, the moral and intellectual advantages which have been enjoyed, will all be taken into the account. The basis of judgment with the heathen will obviously be far different from that which will be adopted in the case of those who have enjoyed the light and blessings of the gospel. Those who have sinned without the divine law, and especially without the precepts and motives of the gospel, will be judged without the law. The cities which Christ visited, and where he wrought his mighty works, were placed on a far different footing from those which, in ancient times, had not enjoyed the benefit of his instructions and miracles. In Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida, the responsibility of the inhabitants was immensely increased by what Christ had done for them. In view of their impenitence and guilt, he said unto them, "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art

exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee."

These declarations bring vividly before us the great fact, or principle, in the divine administration, that there is uniformly an increase of responsibility with an increase of light; and that our privileges and circumstances will enter largely into the evidences that will constitute the basis of the decisions of the judgment-day. Probably the rigid principle of justice will require that every shade of advantage or disadvantage, shall bear upon the deliberations of that solemn occasion. The child of vicious or infidel parents will stand in a far different light from one who has had the advantages of an early religious culture, who has been taught to exercise reverence towards God, and love towards the Saviour. Those who appear before that tribunal, after having abused the most tender and exalted religious privileges, and slighted the most faithful warnings, and resisted the influences of earnest prayers, and the strivings of the Spirit, will see even the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah entering heaven, before they gain admission. It is a terrible thought to conceive of any as being excluded from the abodes of the blessed. But is it not also a terrible thing that any, in the midst of gospel light and the highest religious advantages, should trample underfoot the Son of God, and do despite to the spirit of grace? Is it not a terrible

thing, that wrong, injustice, cruelty, and oppression should exist, where all the influences and precepts of religion teach the very opposite principles? If my emotions are excited at a view of some of the consequences that will follow the judgment-day, they are also strongly excited at a view of those awful forms of sin, that render such a judgment necessary, and such consequences inevitable. For it cannot be denied, that there are evils and forms of wickedness, the permission of which would be to us an inexplicable mystery, were we not assured that Christ has appointed a day in which he will judge the world, and render to every man according to his deeds.

The basis of judgment which is laid down by our Saviour, in his description of the last great day, is worthy of our special attention. In extending his welcome to the righteous, he is represented as saying, "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in," etc. And in uttering the sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," he adds, "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not." Then, in explanation, he declares, that he is represented in every disciple that is the recipient of kindness, or the object of neglect. To my mind, there is a significant meaning in these utterances, that are to accompany the decisions that will be made at the judgment-day. They teach directly

the necessity of the principle of benevolence in those who will be at last admitted to the mansions of glory. We need, it is true, to be sound in the faith. We need to have a wellgrounded hope. But if we appear before the judgment-seat with faith, hope, and charity, we shall hear the announcement, "the greatest of these is charity." Our system of belief may be ably prepared, and may be carefully expressed in the most precise and unexceptionable language; it may be defended with logical skill and irresistible argument, and yet, unless it yields the fruits of the spirit, — love, peace, gentleness, and kindness, — it will be of little service to us here, and will avail us nothing when called to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. We would have men contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, but we would also have them remember, that faith without works is dead, and that he who has not the spirit of Christ is none of his. I am aware that there are persons in some denominations, full of zeal for the mint, anise, and cumin of religion, and for rigidness in the external forms and authorized formularies of their faith, who sit in judgment upon those who differ from them in non-essentials, and are ready enough, upon the most trivial grounds, to pronounce sentence of condemnation. But I apprehend that many of these human judgments will be, at the supreme tribunal, reversed, and that men will find that Christ, and he alone, has laid down the principles that will constitute the basis of the decisions of that day.

But we hasten to speak of the results of the solemn transactions of that occasion. We are informed

that the vast multitude that will be collected before the judgment-seat, will be divided into two classes To those on the right hand the King will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Then shall he say also to them on the left, Depart from me, ye cursed, unto everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." To the righteous, the day will be one of triumph, of reward, of rapture. It will be the glorious termination of a career of toil and self-denial, of ardent hopes and fearful doubts. The saint will feel that now the great question of existence is settled. The battle with temptation, unbelief, and the world, has been fought, and heaven has been won. Oh, with what indescribable delight will the multitudes of the redeemed listen to those precious words as they fall upon the ear: "Come, ye blessed of my Father." Come to a kingdom, rich in every pleasure and honor, abounding in treasures that can never perish, in joys that can never fade, in honors that are immortal. Come to a kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. The nature and glory of a kingdom upon which the Deity has been for ages expending his infinite wisdom and power, obviously surpasses all human comprehension. We can only exclaim, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

But there is another sentence pronounced at this dread tribunal, — a sentence that fixes the destiny of

other immortal souls, — a sentence, every word of which will fall as a thunderbolt upon the condemned sinner. What volumes of awful meaning are compressed within that one word, "Depart!" Depart from what? From God, — from heaven, — from all holy society, — from all hope! Depart, — never, never to return! Can a human mind, under such circumstances, listen to this word and retain its consciousness? It would seem enough to annihilate every guilty auditor.

Is it not a solemn thought, and one that should arouse the careless, that we are all every day preparing for the judgment? Our words and deeds are every hour travelling before us to meet us at that solemn tribunal. The Christian is preparing for it by his devotions, prayers, faith, and charities. The sinner is preparing for that day. The vicious man, the infidel, the inebriate, the blasphemer, are all making a terrible preparation. The miser, who clings to gold as his God, is hastening to the judgment. The fraudulent man, who is quietly and successfully carrying on his systems of deception, is preparing for his trial. The military leader, who cruelly sacrifices human life, will be called to render in his account. The cruel taskmaster, who crushes to the dust his fellow man, is hastening to the tribunal of the Supreme Master, who will render to every man *according to his deeds.*

# XVIII.

## CELEBRATION OF THE PASSOVER.

"This do in remembrance of me."—St. Luke xxii. 19.

These words fell from the Saviour's lips under circumstances of thrilling interest. His eventful life upon the earth was drawing to a close. A series of dangers and tragedies were to terminate in one great tragedy. From his faithful disciples, who had shared in his toils, he was soon to be separated. This was his last supper with them. A small gathering, and an insignificant occasion in the world's estimation. Yet in reality a scene of greater moment than the most costly and luxurious feasts ever held in palaces, or graced by the presence of princes! True, the table is simple, the guests are of humble origin, the master of the feast presides over an entertainment consisting only of bread and wine; yet there is a royalty here, and a power, that the world will one day recognize and acknowledge. There are heroes here, whose names and achievements will be remembered, long after the names of kings and nobles are forgotten. On this occasion, they make no eloquent

discourses, or joyous utterances. For the crucifixion is so near, that its shadow falls upon the scene, giving to it a sad and melancholy aspect. In the group there is one false heart, — one spirit not in unison with the rest, — a spirit that is plotting evil. In this upper room, not only have the holiness and benevolence of heaven their representatives, but human depravity in its worst form has its representative. Loyalty and treason, love and avarice, meet at the same table. The Master of the feast, as he breaks the bread, and passes around the cup, utters but one wish, — gives but one command. "This do in remembrance of me." And the command was given not to the twelve only, but to all his faithful followers down to the end of time. The Saviour designed this supper as a perpetual monument, dedicated to his memory; as a means of spiritual communion with himself; as a type of that great feast which he is preparing for his friends in his Father's kingdom. What the ancient dispensation was to the new and more spiritual system, — what the Shekinah in the temple was to the presence-chamber of heaven's King, this rite is to the joys and worship of a celestial state of being.

We would consider some of the prominent features in the history of Christ, which this ordinance should impress upon the memory.

The topic most prominent at the table with his disciples, was the sufferings that were just before him. The very elements were impregnated, as it were, with the tragical scenes that were about to open upon Calvary. The broken bread represented

his mangled body, the wine his blood that was to be shed. Death was in the feast; but a death that was to give life to the world, — a death through which the grave and hell were to be conquered. And as Christ knew that at the time of his arrest and crucifixion, his disciples would be alarmed and scattered, he desired to fasten the event upon their memory, by associating it with this interesting rite. "With desire," said he, "have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Their next meeting would be at another feast, when the trials and hazards of this life would be over, and when the glories of the everlasting kingdom would open upon their view. And to prepare them for that scene, he desired that they should hold in remembrance the great fact of his sufferings and death. He wished to have it kept constantly before their minds, to sustain their faith, and comfort them with the assurance that a full and complete atonement had been made for them. In seasons of doubt and perplexity, he would have their eyes rest upon the cross. When tempted to yield to despondency, they were to remember that their great Master was numbered with transgressors. When called to enter the dark valley of death, they were to remember that the footprints of the Lord of glory were impressed upon that valley. And the great fact in the world's history, to the whole church, and to all mankind, is the atoning sacrifice of Christ. This looms up above all others, — stands out by itself as the sun in the

heavens, shedding light upon all other events, illuminating every pathway of life; carrying hope to the despairing, joy to the sorrowing. It is the great fact of theology, of history, of moral science. It reveals the love and mercy of the Deity more intensely than any other divine manifestation. And just before entering upon his last great work, just before descending into the deep chasm that separates this earth from the spirit world, he met his disciples to comfort them, and to receive from them the pledge that he should be remembered. And how deeply he penetrated the darkness and gloom of that grief, no finite mind can answer. From its depths we know that even the light of heaven was excluded, for from the sufferer went forth the agonizing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But now is that chasm bridged over, and faith may travel on it, exclaiming in triumph, "Oh death, where is thy sting! oh grave, where is thy victory!" On the other side, the pilgrim may descry a celestial light overhanging the paradise of God. In the distance may be dimly seen the outlines of lofty towers, of gorgeous palaces, of cities that have foundations whose builder is God.

The bearing, therefore, of the sufferings of Jesus upon man's immortal interests, is the great feature to be held in remembrance. And in proportion to the light shed upon this subject, do we feel a sense of moral obligation, of duties to be performed, of dangers in the future to escape, and of rewards to secure. Out of the idea of a future life, and desire for it, grow all religions, true and false, heathen and

Christian. Paganism is but a feeling after a knowledge of a state of existence beyond the grave. Mahometanism is grafted upon the longings of the human soul for immortal happiness.

Now the scheme of redemption, with the revelations made by its author, clear up the mysteries of death to every mind that will exercise faith. "He that believeth in me," said Christ, "shall never die." Shall never die! How full of meaning is this utterance! How is the gloom of the sick chamber, and the sadness of parting with friends, and the anguish of apparent dissolution, dissipated by it! Death the beginning of another life, pure, glorious, immortal!

*Another fact to be remembered in connection with the holy supper, is the divine character of the Master of the feast.* This do in remembrance of me. Of whom? A fellow-mortal? So say some who would rob him of the glory that he had with the Father before the world was. An angel? But the command has gone forth, "Let all the angels of God worship him." A created being of the highest order? But we are told that "by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." Taking, then, the Bible as our authority, we are driven to the conclusion that he who instituted the supper, and wrought out man's salvation, is none other than a divine being, — the second person of the glorious Trinity. To be remembered, therefore, includes a cordial recognition of his divinity, — an acknowledgment that he is the coequal Son of the Father. It is true,

that when we attempt to analyze our conceptions of a divine being, the mind is lost in the vastness and profound mystery of the idea. At every effort, the inquiry comes up to us from the depths of infinity, "Who by searching can find out God, who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" We may run along the lines of thought over which inspired men have travelled; we may sit at the feet of Jesus, and ponder over his utterances, "I and my Father are one,"—"Before Abraham was I am;" we may traverse the works of creation and endeavor to form a conception of the power that called such magnificence into being out of nothing; that rolled the planets in their orbits, and clothed the suns with such splendor, and worlds with so rich a drapery of flowers, and changing forests and variegated verdure; we may bow the knee in prayer, and, shutting out the cares and vanities of life, plead for new and inspiring views of the Deity, and the prayer may be answered to the extent of our ability to comprehend God, and yet the reality will be at an infinite distance from us. Our conceptions are imperfect, dim, shadowy. The eternal throne is high above the stars, surrounded by glories too dazzling for human vision. The splendors of the celestial court no mortal eyes can gaze upon. Much less can the essence of Deity be penetrated by any finite mind. We acknowledge, that of all mysteries the mystery of the divine existence is the greatest. Were all others explored and understood, this would remain. We might solve all questions in science and philosophy,—reconcile the apparently conflicting doctrines

in ethics, — measure the distances of the fixed stars, the extent of the universe, — read with a prophetic eye the history of the future, and yet the mysteries of the divine being would remain unfathomed.

But all this should not deter us from striving after the most vivid and exalted views of the Deity, that are within the reach of finite powers. For our conceptions of the Godhead necessarily give a coloring to all our moral and religious views. Our thought of God is the centre of our moral system, around which our doctrines, opinions, and feelings revolve.

In remembering Christ, we are not only to call to mind his divinity, but the peculiar features of the divine character which he made the most prominent. As a complete revelation could not be made, those points were selected which bore most directly upon man's welfare. The divine love was conspicuous in the Saviour's history. This shone forth from all his words and deeds. It illumined his pathway from the manger to the cross. Upon Calvary it culminated, and thence spread over Jerusalem and Judea, and is destined to encircle the earth with its benign influence. The wisdom of the Godhead was also displayed in the conception and execution of the plan of redemption, — a plan so eminently adapted to man's necessities, and to the claims of the divine government.

As the friends of Christ, therefore, we should meditate upon his divine nature and attributes, — meditate upon them until they become, so to speak, a part of our own spiritual nature. By dwelling

upon them, our religious life will be quickened, and the Christian will grow up "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Feeding upon them will give strength to the weak, courage to the desponding. It will enable the departing saint to shout, "I know that my Redeemer liveth!" I know that he is able to save unto the uttermost all that shall come to him.

We lose much by the neglect of religious meditation. We allow the cares of the world to absorb our thoughts, and crowd out these mighty and soul inspiring themes. We are content to feed on husks, when a spiritual feast is provided in our Father's house. We are satisfied with the grovelling pleasures of earth, when, by a spiritual connection with Christ, we may partake of the blessedness of his divine nature, and be thrilled by those joys that are the portion of celestial intelligences.

In connection with the celebration of the Last Supper, we are also to remember the instructions of Christ.

It is true that he did not unfold in regular order, a system of theology. He established no school of moral science for the exclusive instruction of the refined and intellectual. He rather availed himself of opportunities, as they occurred, from day to day, to unlock his treasures. At suitable times, he scatters broadcast over society his great doctrines, leaving to others the work of gathering them up, and recording them for the benefit of mankind. He dropped truths by the wayside, in the lonely cottage, when conversing with the penitent, or consoling the

afflicted, or comforting the dying. His system was like nature, the storehouse of his imagery, irregular though beautiful; sublime like the mountains piled together; pure as the sunlight; fresh as the dew, and variegated as the scenery and the flowers of summer. And in this form it was best adapted to the mass of mankind. Had he taught in a dry, scholastic style, but few would have listened to him. Had he established seats of learning, only certain privileged classes would have received his instructions. But as his object was to enable the whole world to reap the benefit of his teachings, he went out into the open air, under the broad canopy of heaven, and addressed the multitude. He placed himself in sympathetic connection with the human heart in its varied circumstances of want and sorrow. He presented truth under striking images and emblems, in order that their beauty and force might be readily appreciated by all his hearers. He himself was the light of the world. His salvation was a fountain of living waters, to which all who thirsted were invited. His Father was the great Shepherd who loved and would protect his flock.

These teachings, also, should be remembered with implicit confidence in their truth. If they have passed satisfactorily the test of every trial to which they have been submitted; if they accord with the dictates of enlightened reason, and the previous revelation of the divine will; if beside the internal evidence of their truth, they are supported by miracles and fulfilled prophecies, and by the holy life of their Author, we are bound to receive them. If such

proofs as these cannot be relied upon, I would ask, what force is there in any evidences that may be brought to bear upon a system of moral truth?

The most vital questions in ethics and theology the Great Teacher has settled; and his true followers will not spend their lives in agitating these questions, and in laying over and over again the foundations of their faith. But, regarding this foundation as forever settled, they will go on with the spiritual structure, and attempt to realize the idea of the apostle, when he says, "Ye are the temple of the living God." While others make no progress for the want of faith in the first principles of the Gospel, the true believer will advance in moral truth. One doctrine after another will open before his view. His faculties will expand and be capable of grasping greater truths. The soul will feel enriched by its treasures, and being godlike in its pursuits, it will be godlike in its happiness. If the study of the works of nature and the discovery of her hidden laws, is attended with pleasure, — if the astronomer delights to wander amid the stars, and view the harmony and splendor of the heavenly bodies, how much more glorious is it to walk amid the grandeurs of moral truth, to read the laws which have been instituted for the government and happiness of the moral universe.

Oh, if in remembering Christ we could remember all the sublime truths that he uttered, — all the precious promises that he made to those who should be faithful to him unto death; could we live, and move, and have our spiritual being in these glorious themes,

a new existence would open before us. Fresh fountains of delight would spring up in the soul. We should be ready to exclaim with the apostle, "Yea, and I count all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ my Lord." "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Oh, this would be life, — a life above the vanities of earth, — above the frowns or applause of the world, — a life unaffected by the sorrows or the joys of earth, — a life mingling in with the life of Christ, and flowing on with the progress of his glorious kingdom.

But this remembrance of Christ, in order to fully meet the Saviour's exhortation, must not only have regard to the prominent features of his life and character, but must also call into exercise the strongest and tenderest emotions of the soul. We are bound to remember Christ with the highest admiration, with the warmest gratitude and most intense love. There are a thousand objects in nature, in the beauties and splendors with which the earth is decorated, in the changing seasons, in the storm and the sunshine, to excite our admiration. We regard with admiration the career of distinguished heroes, the growth and achievements of nations, the progress of science, art, literature. But what is there in all these to awaken our enthusiasm compared with the glory of the Saviour's career? What is there to fill the soul with admiration, compared with the history, character, and achievements of the Son of God?

Behold him as the Great Physician in the streets of Jerusalem, — as a teacher in the temple, — as a preacher upon the mount, — as a sufferer in Gethsemane, — as the Redeemer upon the cross, and say if his character from every point of view does not command our admiration and love? Shall we cling to the frozen forms of religion, when we have before us a Saviour so full of vitality, beauty, glory, and life-giving power? Can we at any time forget the debt of gratitude that we owe to this infinite benefactor? No words, indeed, can express the obligation that we are under to Jesus. We must wait until our powers are developed in the heavenly world, before we can approximate towards an expression of it. For all that we are, and all that we hope to be, we are indebted to Christ. He alone has disarmed death of its terrors, and conquered our spiritual foes. He enables us to enter the dark valley with composure, and strengthens us with the sweet utterance, "Fear not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy helper."

# XIX.

## AGONY IN GETHSEMANE.

"AND HE FELL ON HIS FACE, AND PRAYED, SAYING, O MY FATHER, IF IT BE POSSIBLE, LET THIS CUP PASS FROM ME; NEVERTHELESS, NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS THOU WILT." — Matthew xxvi. 39.

"The moon was shining yet. The orient's brow,
Set with the morning star, was not yet dim;
And the deep silence which subdues the breath
Like a strong feeling, hung upon the world
As sleep upon the pulses of a child.
'Twas the last watch of night. Gethsemane,
With its bathed leaves of silver, seem'd dissolved
In visible stillness; and as Jesus' voice,
With its bewildering sweetness, met the ear
Of his disciples, it vibrated on
Like the first whisper in a silent world.
They came on slowly. Heaviness oppress'd
The Saviour's heart, and when the kindnesses
Of his deep love were pour'd, he felt the need
Of near communion, for his gift of strength
Was wasted by the spirit's weariness.
He left them there and went a little on,
And in the depth of that hush'd silentness,
Alone with God, he fell upon his face,
And as his heart was broken with the rush

Of his surpassing agony, and death,
Wrung to him from a dying universe,
Was mightier than the Son of man could bear,
He gave his sorrows way — and in the deep
Prostration of his soul, breathed out the prayer,
'Father, if it be possible with thee,
Let this cup pass from me.'"

This remarkable prayer opens a scene of melancholy interest. The passover had been celebrated. The Saviour had delivered his farewell discourse, — a discourse full of rich consolations and glorious hopes. The hour was late as he left the city with his chosen friends, and bent his footsteps towards the garden of Gethsemane. The shadows of night were falling upon the walls, temple, and streets of Jerusalem; but deeper and darker shadows were falling upon the spirit of Jesus. He knew what was before him. He knew the awful nature of the tragedy which on that night was to open. Passing the gate, now called Stephen's gate, which was nearest to the temple walls on the north, he crossed the brook of Cedron, and sought in the seclusion of Gethsemane, preparation of heart for the trials that were before him. This garden was a retired spot, situated at the foot of the Mount of Olives, and was the favorite resort of Christ for meditation and prayer. After the toils of the day, he would often spend the whole night there in the open air, dividing the hours between rest and communion with the Father. Having reached the garden, he took apart with him Peter, James, and John, the beloved disciples, that they might be the honored

witnesses of his prayers and conflicts. The same who were with him upon the mount of transfiguration, and beheld the glories of that scene, and heard voices from the celestial world, were now admitted to the dark chamber of the Saviour's sufferings. They had followed their Master in his journeys to the cities and villages of Judea; had witnessed his miracles, — listened to his eloquent and heart-searching discourses, — been his companions in his joys and sorrows. But no scene of such thrilling and overpowering interest had fallen under their observation, as that of which this memorable garden was the theatre. There were sorrows here, and profound mysteries, and agonizing prayers, and a baptism of tears and blood, that were calculated to excite the most intense and conflicting emotions.

In meditating upon this scene, the prominent points that present themselves for our consideration, are the agony of Christ, his destitution of the sympathy of his disciples, and his entire submission to the will of his Father.

From the nature of the case, we cannot expect from the Evangelists so full and accurate an account of what transpired on this occasion, as on others that were more calm, and afforded greater facilities for being reported. The night was dark; the disciples were extremely weary; and their minds must have been greatly excited, and filled with gloomy forebodings. Yet the language that is used to express the agony of the Saviour, is the strongest which could be employed. He is represented as penetrated and overwhelmed with the most piercing

sorrows. The words employed by St. Mark in the original, signify a mixture of terror, amazement, and heavy griefs, that cannot be expressed in language. In one verse he represents the sufferer as encircled with sorrows, that broke in upon him with such violence, as apparently to shut off all means of his escape. One writer observes, "that Christ's continued resolution in the midst of these agonies and supernatural horrors, was the most heroic that can be imagined, and far superior to valor in single combat, or in battle; where in one case the spirit is raised by natural indignation, and in the other by the pomp of war, the sound of martial music, and the example of fellow-soldiers." The expression in the prayer, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," reveals the depth of his agonies.

He had come, indeed, upon a mission of suffering. He knew before his incarnation, that he should be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." But this cup he desired, if possible, might pass from him. He could drink any other. He could face his most violent and implacable enemies. He could receive the insults, blows, and curses of the infuriated populace. He could look upon the cross, the nails, the spear, and the iron clad soldiers, with comparative composure. But this anguish he would gladly, if possible, escape. He approximates towards an expression of it, in the declaration which he made to the three chosen disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with me." His spirit is ready to faint and sink, and he desires his friends to tarry near him, and watch and pray.

The nature of this sorrow, with the various elements that entered into it, we cannot of course fully explore. The Saviour had previously passed through severe struggles, with the world and with temptation. He had encountered the opposition of bitter foes, who had repeatedly attempted to take his life. His grief and indignation had been excited by the hypocrisy and deep iniquity of the Pharisees. He had been tried by the want of stability and devotion on the part of his professed friends; by the unwillingness of men to repent, and believe in him; by the slight impression which was made upon the minds of the multitudes who witnessed his "mighty works;" by the difficulties which he everywhere encountered, in convincing men of the spiritual nature and ends of his kingdom. But this was the great conflict of his life; the great moral battle in which he encountered the combined forces of evil. This was the crisis of his existence, — the crisis, I may say, in the great work of redemption. Here the mighty tides of influence, — of hostile moral forces met, and the Messiah is left to struggle in their foaming, raging waters. He grasps, as it were, the arms of his disciples, that they may help to sustain him. If he sinks now, it is all over with the hopes of this apostate world. What has been accomplished in the past — miracles, benevolent deeds, eloquent teachings, and severe trials — will not atone for sin. The sublime work that called the Son of God from his glorious throne, will remain incomplete, unless the floods of this agony are passed through.

But still the question presses upon us, what con-

stituted that indescribable distress, that the Saviour thrice prayed that he might, if it were possible, escape? We obtain, I think, some clue to it, from the words of prophecy, uttered as though the events had already transpired. "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him." He undertook to satisfy the demands of God's violated law, and to endure for us, as far as it was possible, the wounds consequent upon our transgressions. However great might be the burden and agonies attendant upon achieving a full and complete redemption, Christ so loved the world that he was resolved to carry the work through. And here in the garden, just before his betrayal and arrest, and as the last terrible tragedy was opening before him, he felt the tremendous pressure of the vast undertaking which he had assumed. Views of the enormity of sin, and of its fearful consequences in the eternal world, rolled in upon his mind like successive waves from a fathomless ocean of sorrow. He saw the necessity of divine justice as well as the blessedness of divine mercy. He saw that the eternal throne must be sustained, though all else should perish. He saw how destructive and awful an evil sin was; that it tended directly to the subversion of all order and authority; that it broke in upon the happiness of God's moral universe, and threatened its utter annihilation; that it would, unless checked, involve the universe in one common ruin. He saw, too, the state of the world that he had come to redeem and

bless; its awful apostasy and deep guilt; its malice, treachery, cruelty, and systems of oppression. He saw from what exalted heights man had fallen into the deep pit and miry clay of sin. He saw and felt too, what no human mind can conceive, or if conceived, what no human language could express. For in all our endeavors to analyze the nature of that suffering which was endured to atone for our sins, we are completely baffled. After having exhausted the power of language and of thought, there are depths which we cannot reach. There are perplexing mysteries which we cannot solve. There is much said by theological writers upon this point, but it amounts to but little. It does not touch the reality, the essence of the thing. We are not informed that Christ explained, even to his favorite disciples, the nature of his sorrow. They saw his insupportable agony, heard his groans, listened to his earnest cries to the Father, saw him sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground; but into the deep causes of the distress, they could not penetrate.

Besides being oppressed by the most vivid views of the nature and consequences of sin, it is probable that the sorrow of Christ was increased by the agency of the powers of darkness. They would naturally seize upon this occasion to make their last desperate effort to break up the plan of salvation, and thwart the divine purposes of mercy. They had before attempted to make inroads upon the holiness of the Saviour's character. They had sought opportunities to break down his integrity, and thus despoil

him of his power. But from every conflict he had come off a glorious conqueror. And now his eventful career was about to close. Should he triumph to the last, the victory would be one from which the powers of hell would never recover. The Conqueror would be exalted far above all principalities and powers, and have a name above every name. Hence every means was doubtless used by the evil spirits, on this dark and horrible night, to destroy the Lord of glory. How they on this, or on former occasions, gained access to his mind, or what forms of temptation or torture they used, we cannot determine. It is enough for us to know, that there are avenues of communication between this and the world of lost spirits, and that devils were permitted to assail the virtue of the Son of the Most High. Indeed, we are assured that upon the great moral battle field of life, we are all called upon to contend against these malignant forces. "For we wrestle," St. Paul says, "not against flesh and blood" alone, "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world." There cannot, therefore, be a doubt, but that the agony of the Saviour was greatly increased by these foes.

It is also probable, that his sufferings were augmented by the consciousness of the base ingratitude of mankind, the implacable malice of the Jews, the treachery of Judas, and the weakness of Peter and his fellow disciples. The events of the future were full in his view. The terrible picture was before his eyes, in all its dark colorings and gloomy features. He was about to be betrayed, and by a

professed friend; aye more, by a chosen apostle, one who had sat at the table with him, listened to his teachings, and shared in his favors. He was about to be crucified by the very class whom he had come specially to bless. Peter would deny him with oaths and curses, and his bosom companions, in the hour of danger, would flee and abandon him to his fate. Nay, more; the scheme of redemption, sealed with his precious blood, would be rejected by thousands, and would for nineteen centuries, at least, be unknown by millions of the human family. He foresaw the bitter opposition that his system would encounter, the arguments that would be framed against it, the terrible storms of persecution that would rage against those who should embrace his truth and believe on his name. Can we longer wonder at his exclamation, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

*The conduct of the disciples on this memorable occasion*, cannot escape our notice. Human nature, in its best estate, affords but a frail dependence. But in this instance, it seems to us wonderful, that the disciples could be so indifferent to what was transpiring before their eyes, and feel so little sympathy for their Master while he was enduring such agony. The scenes through which they had just before passed, were of the most exciting and thrilling character, and they could not but have been impressed with the conviction that some startling event, or gloomy tragedy, was about to happen. They knew that Judas had gone out, carrying with him the heart of a traitor, and they had reason to expect

that at any moment his fatal purpose might be executed. Peter, with all his professions of devotion and firmness, had been distinctly told, that before morning he would three times basely deny his Lord. The disciples had been warned, notwithstanding their apparent willingness to lay down their lives for Christ, that they would that night flee in terror and desert him. Yet at the very moment when they should have exercised the utmost vigilance, and afforded to Christ their cordial sympathy, they are found sleeping. In order to secure the special coöperation of Peter, John, and James, they are taken apart from the others, and witness the distress depicted in the Saviour's countenance, and hear his agonizing cries. Yet Christ, in the height of his sorrow, came to them three times, and found them overcome by sleep. Filled with the utmost amazement and grief at their conduct, he exclaimed "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" What, could ye not, at a moment like this, a moment pregnant with infinite consequences to mankind, a crisis that awakens the deepest interest among the angelic hosts, and in the remotest regions of the universe, could ye not watch and give me your sympathy for one short hour? Is your love so feeble, or your faith so weak, or your views of spiritual and eternal realities so faint, that you can sleep at such a time as this?" Yet it appears that no appeals or entreaties could arouse them, and the Saviour is left to struggle with his sufferings alone. While viewing the scene, we may well exclaim, in the words of the prophet, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with

dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him who treadeth in the wine fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me. I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore my own arm brought salvation."

We cannot suppose that the divine nature of Christ partook of these intense sorrows; although it is difficult for us to conceive of the Saviour's passing through such agonies, without his whole being sympathizing with them, or in some way being affected by them. But his earnest desire for the support and sympathy of his disciples, as well as an unwillingness to admit that divinity, is left under any circumstances to experience suffering, lead us to the conclusion that his human nature was called to endure this tremendous weight of sorrow. Regarding, therefore, the event in this light, we can readily conceive that there was an intensity of meaning in Christ's inquiry, "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" During his whole life there had not been a period when he stood in such need of the support which his disciples could afford. He does not, indeed, ask them to suffer with him. He does not ask them to lay down their lives for him, or to stand in the front of the battle ground and receive the blows of his enemies. He simply asks that they watch and pray with him. And besides doing this to sustain him, he had another object in view, that they might them-

selves be fortified against temptation. The night was one that was to try their souls as well as his own. Their love, their constancy, their faith, were to be put to a severe test. The traitor would soon appear. The soldiers were already putting on their armor. The foes were lighting their torches. The mob was gathering its forces. In the glare of the torchlight might be seen within the city groups of rough, fiendlike beings, conferring together how they might capture their victim. While these preparations were going on, while even the multitude were pouring through the gates, and were following the traitor towards the garden, the disciples slept. They could not watch one hour, — not even to prepare themselves for the terrible conflict. Hence, when the trial came, they were swept before it.

The idea that it was the human nature of Christ that suffered on this occasion, is strengthened by the fact that an angel was sent to support and comfort him. We can hardly suppose that a finite and created being could afford any essential aid to a divine sufferer. But the incarnate Christ might be sustained by the help and sympathy of an angel; and though the disciples slept, yet we are assured that spiritual beings watched with the Lord of glory, and were ready and anxious to relieve him of this oppressive load of sorrow.

The last point to be noticed is, *the entire submission to the divine will, which Christ exercised under these intense sufferings.* In the previous history of the Saviour, his submission to the Father had been marked and uniform. But it had never been brought

to so severe a trial as at the present time. On no former occasion do we hear from Christ's lips, expressions of such intense feeling and acute suffering as on this memorable night. With his soul pierced through by a thousand sorrows, he prays, that *if it be possible* this cup might pass from him. If in any way his great work can be accomplished, and the world saved, without a continuation of the horrors of that night, he desires that the cup of affliction may be taken from his lips. If it be possible to satisfy the demands of justice in any other way, — if infinite wisdom and love can meet the emergency through any other process, or by any other measures, he desires that it may be done. Yet, at the very instant when his agony is the most intense, and he is praying with all the fervency of his soul to be delivered from it, he says to the Father, "Not my will, but thine, be done." "Let the tide of sorrow roll on, — let suffering be piled upon suffering, and agony upon agony, until the very blood starts from my veins, until life itself become extinct, if such is the will of an infinitely wise and holy God."

What a sublime triumph have we here! How do the very spirit of grandeur, and the essence of glory emerge from the gloom and horrors of that scene! We almost forget the suffering, in the splendors of this victory. Pain, temptation, the powers of hell, all are conquered by this mighty act of submission. Christ's will is absorbed in the divine will, so that they both constitute a unity.

The entire reliance of the Saviour upon the Father's wisdom and goodness, is here presented in

the most vivid manner. He knew that the Judge of all the earth would do right. He knew that his Heavenly Father would not inflict upon him one unnecessary sorrow. He knew that if it were possible, the cup would pass from him. He knew that the nature of God was love, and that he delighted only in the happiness of the universe; and therefore he was willing to leave his soul in his hands.

Thus the glorious Redeemer prepared himself for all that might befall him. He received in the garden his baptism of sorrow, and was ready for whatever the malice and cruelty of his enemies might inflict upon him. Insults, mockings, scourging, the cross, Calvary, these do not move him. His spirit was crucified, before his body was nailed to the cross. His soul was wounded, before the spear entered his side. The powers of hell tried their strength upon him, before he was seized by human arms, and condemned by human authority. What a lesson does this submission teach us! How ready ought we to be, under our lesser sufferings, to say to the Supreme Father, "thy will be done." To bring us to merge our wills in the divine will, is the grand purpose of religion. And not until we do this, shall we meet the requisitions of the divine law, and find rest for the soul.

# XX.

## TREACHERY OF JUDAS.

"Betrayest thou the son of man with a kiss?"
Luke xxii. 48.

Such was the mild, yet withering remark, with which Christ met the signal of Judas's treachery. The traitor entered the garden at the head of a large and promiscuous multitude, composed of Roman soldiers, the officers of the chief-priests and Pharisees, and the rude and vulgar from the lowest class of society. Some carried lanterns and torches, while others were armed with swords and staves, as though they had come out to arrest a notorious robber, or encounter a banditti of outlaws. As is not unfrequently the case, when a great benefactor or reformer is to be put down, we find in this group that the extremes of society meet. The proud Pharisee, and the officers of the chief-priests, mingle with the most degraded of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and they make common cause against the Messiah. Judas, fixing his eye upon Christ, approached him in a manner indicating the greatest respect and affection.

As had been the custom of the disciples, he saluted him with a kiss, at the same time saying, "Hail, Master;" words expressive of his best wishes for Christ's welfare and happiness. The Saviour, after surveying the motley group that stood before him, turned his benignant countenance towards the traitor, and said, "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Then stepping forward with the greatest coolness and intrepidity of manner, he said to the multitude, "Whom seek ye?" They replied, Jesus of Nazareth. He frankly said, "I am he," and with this utterance there went forth such a power, or such impressions of his divine majesty and glory, that his enemies recoiled and fell to the ground. During this conversation it is mentioned as a significant fact, that Judas, who had formerly mingled with the disciples of Jesus, went over and stood with his enemies. The fatal act of his life had been committed, and he now casts in his lot with the vile rabble and iron-hearted soldiers who seek the life of the innocent Jesus. Anticipating, probably, a conflict between the friends and foes of Christ, he desired to be on what he deems the strongest side, and to receive the protection of those into whose hands he had betrayed his Lord. He preferred to trust in an arm of flesh, — in power based upon injustice and cruelty, rather than in him who had stilled the waves of the ocean, and established his authority over the elements and laws of nature.

Since the time of Christ, the name of Judas has stood before the world as the type of all that is dark, deceitful, and base in the human character. In

tracing out his career, although we may be led through pathways filled with shadows that fall from his character, and may feel the chill from his cold treachery, and shudder at the fate of one who had been so highly favored and blessed, yet the contemplation may serve us in our experience, and render us watchful of dangers that surround the footsteps of all.

In the first place, notice *the nature and aggravation of this crime.* All persons will admit that treachery is one of the most hateful and destructive in the catalogue in human sins. It involves the double guilt of committing a wrong, and abusing confidence, or the sacred obligations of friendship. Judas sinned with the officers and men who sought to arrest Jesus, and he also sinned in using his knowledge of the person of Christ, and of his private retreats, to betray him into the hands of his enemies. He gave the deepest hue to his crime, by professing such affection for Christ, while he was plotting his ruin. Had he come out openly and denied him, and been known as a foe to the Messiah, and his system of doctrines, the case would have been different. But up to the very hour, and in the act of betraying him, he manifested the warmest affection. As though his recent and short separation from his Master had occasioned him pain, he appeared to rejoice at meeting him again, and saluted him in the most friendly manner. There was a smile upon his countenance, and a kiss upon his lips, while the blackest treachery lurked in his heart. With his mouth he said, "Hail, Master," while his spirit said, Hail to the blood-

thirsty wretches who seek the life of the Lord of glory! Hail to this mob who come with torches, and clubs, and swords!

Impressed with the deep hypocrisy that marked his conduct, the Saviour put to him that searching question, "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Is there no other way in which you can make me known to my adversaries? Must you employ your professed love, as a means of betraying me into the hands of these cruel men? There was a profound meaning in this inquiry, a meaning that must have filled the Saviour with grief. That one could be found on God's earth so lost to all honor, sense of right, gratitude, or friendship, as to commit such an act, must have stung his heart with anguish!

The exalted privileges and rich spiritual blessings which the traitor had enjoyed, add to the enormity of his crime. He had walked and conversed with the Messiah. He had been received to his heart as a bosom companion; had been admitted to his private councils, and chosen as one of the twelve apostles. He had witnessed the miracles of Christ, and could not but have regarded them as manifestations of divine power. He had listened to his instructions in public and in private, — had been moved by the eloquence of his lips, — the sublimity of his doctrines, and the boldness, ardor, and faithfulness that characterized his public ministry. His mind had been enlightened and enriched by those private interviews which the Saviour often held with his disciples, and when he opened to them the treas-

ures of infinite wisdom. He must have felt, while in the presence of the Saviour, listening to his fervent prayers, and the immortal truths upon which he delighted to dwell, that he stood in the portals of heaven, surrounded by a celestial atmosphere, and almost in view of the glories of an immortal state.

The virtues and holy principles which governed the life of Christ, also passed under his inspection. He had the amplest opportunities for judging of the purity of his motives, and the holiness of his life. He could not fail to be impressed with his sincerity, divinity, and authority.

In spiritual advantages, therefore, Judas occupied the highest position that was attainable on earth. He who was "the way, the truth, and the life," was his instructor. He who announced himself to be "the light of the world," was his guide. The worker of mighty miracles was his friend. The being whose biography was condensed in the declaration, "he went about doing good," was his example. The king, whose empire was destined to extend until it embraced all the nations of the earth, was the Master whom he served. Could he have asked for clearer light, or richer advantages, or a more honored or sublime position?

Besides, he had been distinctly warned of his crime, and of the awful consequences that would attend it. While sitting at the table with the other apostles, at the institution of the last supper, he had heard from Christ the distinct declaration, "Behold, one of you shall betray me." The announcement fell as a thunderbolt upon the ears of the eleven,

but Judas knew its import. They, startled by the astounding tidings, cried out, as though distrustful of their own minds and purposes, "Lord, is it I?" The traitor, struggling to maintain his composure, and fearful that his silence might fasten the suspicions of his brethren upon himself, at last muttered out, "Lord, is it I?" Christ replied, "Thou hast said." Thou art the person. Judas also heard from the lips of Christ the withering denunciation, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed; it had been good for that man if he had not been born." The traitor, therefore, enters upon his crime with a full knowledge of its heinous nature, and warned of its guilt and destructive consequences.

Let us next *inquire into the motives that prompted him* to commit an act of such glaring atrocity. Of the early history of Judas, nothing is certainly known. The most prominent fact related of him by the Evangelists, previous to his betrayal of the Saviour, was his displeasure towards Mary for anointing Jesus with so much precious ointment, which might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor. St. Luke maintains that he really cared nothing for the poor, but being the treasurer of the company of apostles, and being a thief, he desired to gain possession of the money and appropriate it to his own use. His disappointment in not, in this instance, accomplishing his ends, seems to have produced in his mind the determination to make up, if possible, the loss in some other way. Hence, knowing the anxiety of the chief priests to

arrest his Master, he went to them and said, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver."

The feelings and motives which induced him to become a follower of Christ, and the state of his mind when he was chosen an apostle, we have no means of accurately analyzing. We can hardly suppose that he was actuated purely by avarice in joining such a company; for certainly there was nothing in their appearance or prospects to encourage the hope of large worldly gains. Having witnessed the miracles of Christ, and participating in the general expectation that a powerful king was soon to appear, who would deliver the nation from their Roman oppressors, he might have been influenced by ambitious motives, and have thought that he would in some way promote his worldly interests by espousing the cause of Christ. Or, like the young ruler who came to Christ to know what he must do to be saved, he might to some extent have been sensible of his sinfulness, and his need of religious instruction. His keen remorse, and his readiness to return the money to the chief-priests, when he found how terrible would be the results of his treachery, show that he was not altogether insensible to the power of conscience, and a sense of justice. He may have supposed after he made the bargain to betray Christ, that his Master would not really be arrested and put to death, but would, by the exercise of his miraculous power, escape out of the hands of his enemies, as he had done on former occasions.

But, whatever may have been the original motives which actuated Judas in joining the company of Christ's disciples, it is clear that at the close of his career, he was in subjection to the base principle of avarice. The growth of this principle in his mind, had probably been gradual. Step by step, he had reached that point, when he was ready to perform the infamous act of betraying the Son of God for thirty pieces of silver.

The power of this principle must have been tremendous, to have worked against the light and spiritual advantages which this man enjoyed. We cannot but believe that, as in any other mind similarly situated, there was a constant struggle going on between the love of money, and the desire for future and immortal happiness. But he allowed the god of this world to rise above the better feelings of his nature, and gain the mastery over him. We are told that Satan entered into him, and instigated him to the commission of this crime. Whether it was the personal Satan, or the devil of avarice, matters but little. For the power of avarice is such, that it may properly be termed a demon. It has, from the time of Judas to the present hour, exercised over many minds a most despotic sway. It has dried up the fountains of affection, — obliterated the noblest feelings of the soul, — blasted every virtue, — broken the power of conscience, and led its victims to trample underfoot justice, right, and humanity. To-day it rules tens of thousands with a rod of iron. It obstructs the progress of God's truth, — consolidates various forms of iniquity, and neutralizes the

forces that are at work to elevate, ennoble, and bless mankind. Judas, bargaining with the chief-priests to betray his Lord for thirty pieces of silver, is the representative of a large number of constituents. He has had, in all ages, his successors, as well as the other apostles.

His history illustrates, too, what depths of iniquity a man may reach while enjoying the highest religious advantages, and placed in circumstances calculated to develop the noblest principles of his nature. He was under the dominion of selfishness while in the society of the great and divine example of benevolence. He was an infidel while listening to the words and doctrines of him who spake as never man spake. Satan was in his heart, while the title of apostle was attached to his name. With the infinite treasures of a heavenly and everlasting kingdom within his reach, he preferred thirty pieces of silver. With the opportunity of securing an immortal fame for integrity, faithfulness, and the noblest heroism, he took as his portion immortal infamy. What a lesson there is in his history! What an emphatic testimony to the importance of associating inward principle with outward advantage! Judas walked with the King of kings and Lord of lords, — witnessed his mighty miracles, — lived under the sunlight of his perfect character, — but neglected inward culture, — neglected secret prayer, self-examination, and the duty of fortifying his mind against easily besetting sins. Hence the rapid growth of this principle of avarice, even when surroun ed by such exalted spiritual privileges. His

mind was blinded by it, so that he could not perceive the excellence of divine truth, the beauty of the divine character, and the glory of the hopes that Christ held out to those who are faithful to his cause.

We would next notice *the consequences of this crime to the traitor himself.* When Judas found that his Master was condemned, and that he probably would be put to death, he was stung with remorse at the thought of his infamous deed. That he, an apostle, honored with the appointment by Christ himself, favored above millions of his fellow men, admitted to the table with the select few around which Christ met his disciples for the last time; that he, under such circumstances, should have betrayed the Lord of glory into the hands of his enemies, was a thought that pierced his soul with the keenest anguish. He could not endure it. He could not live under it. With those thirty pieces of silver in his pocket, existence to him was a curse. He therefore seeks relief by hastening back to the priests with the money. Returning it to them he said, with deep and horrible emotion, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." Now mark the reply of his employers. With the coldest indifference, characteristic of such men, they said, "What is that to us? see thou to that." Judas went to these men hoping to get sympathy, or some relief to his feelings. He could not go to his former companions, for he had most basely deserted them, and cruelly betrayed their Master. The priests and elders, in the first instance, had doubtless received him with cor-

diality and the appearance of friendship. But when he is in trouble, and goes to them with his soul crushed under a mountain weight of remorse, they coldly and sneeringly reply, "What is that to us?" "What concern have we with your sorrows? We bargained with you to perform a certain deed, and we have fulfilled our part of the contract, while you have fulfilled yours. We knew that you were engaging in a mean and infamous business, but what is your suffering to us? See thou to that." Oh, with what increased anguish and horror of mind must he have listened to those scorching words! How they must have rung in his ears and clung to his memory!

But had he possessed much knowledge of human nature, he might have anticipated such a result. For this is the way in which wicked men uniformly treat those whom, by their money, they have made the tools of their base designs. After their own wicked purposes are accomplished, they care not what calamities may befall those whom they were so ready at first to caress and flatter. Their language to the traitor always is, when he begins to reap the fearful consequences of his treachery, "What is that to us? see thou to that." Whether the man has betrayed his country, or his religion, or freedom, or temperance, or any good cause, his fate among his villanous employers is the same.

In the case of Judas, even the innocence of Christ was not a matter of the least consequence to his bitter enemies. They cared no more for Judas's opinion upon this point, than for the anguish which

his infamous deed had wrought in his soul. Their object was, right or wrong, just or unjust, to seize Christ and to execute him. They felt that it was dangerous to the state, dangerous to formalism and to their whited sepulchre system of religion, to have a person of so much piety, boldness, and earnestness in maintaining God's truth among them; and hence their aim was to crush him, without regard to the means which it might be necessary to employ.

It is a fact, however, worthy of notice, that the two men on the earth the most interested to find Christ guilty, bore witness to his innocence. Pilate, with all his anxiety to please the people, and promote his own popularity, said, "I find no fault in this man;" and Judas acknowledged, "I have betrayed innocent blood."

The traitor, failing in his effort to obtain sympathy or relief, "cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed and hung himself." Unable to endure the remorse of conscience which his guilt occasioned, he, in despair, put an end to his own life, thus adding the crime of suicide to that of treachery. To such tragical results do the small beginnings of sin often lead! The love of money, which is the root of all evil, by being cherished, blasted his character, destroyed his life, and ruined his soul.

"The thirty pieces down he flung,
For which his Lord he sold,
And turned away his murderer's face
From that accursed gold.
He cannot sleep, he dares not watch;
That weight is on his heart,
For which nor earth, nor heaven have hope,
Which never can depart.

"A curse is on his memory,
We shudder at his name;
At once we loathe and scorn his guilt,
And yet we do the same:
Alas! the sinfulness of man,
How oft in deed and word
We act the traitor's part again,
And do betray our Lord!"

# XXI.

## TRIAL AND CONDEMNATION OF CHRIST.

"When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor." — Matthew xxvii. 1, 2.

In the trial and condemnation of Christ, we have an affecting illustration of the forbearance of the sufferer, in connection with a development of some of the strongest principles of man's depraved heart. Human wickedness, in the form of hypocrisy, had reached its highest point in the treachery of Judas. But, in the scenes which followed the arrest of Christ, we have other phases of depravity, which stand out with fearful prominence. We have the divine virtues of the Saviour brought in close and vivid contrast with injustice, malice, contempt, and the most wanton cruelty. His enemies having seized and bound him, led him away to the house of Annas, who had, a short time before, held the office of high-priest, and who was the father-in-law of Caiphas. In the mean time a council of the San-

hedrim had been summoned at the palace of the high-priest, whither the Saviour was soon taken to undergo an examination. Such was the intense interest which the occasion excited, that although it was now midnight, yet all the chief priests and the scribes and the elders had assembled, and were waiting to receive Jesus, and to participate in his trial. The innocent sufferer, bound like a criminal, was led by the soldiers into the presence of this proud and sanctimonious body of men.

The case is opened by the high-priest in a manner contrary to all usage, and to the law of Moses, by which they professed to be governed. That law, as well as the authority of tradition, required, that witnesses should be examined, and the testimony or evidences which they furnished, be carefully weighed. But instead of proceeding in this manner, for the obvious reason that they had no witnesses to examine, and no real charges to substantiate against Christ, the high-priest immediately questioned him respecting his disciples and his doctrines. He had really no desire to ascertain the truth as to his teachings and followers, but wished to draw something from the Saviour's lips that might be the ground of an accusation against him. Contrary to every principle of justice, he aimed to make Christ bear witness against himself. Indeed, his mind, as well as that of the priests and scribes, was already made up to sacrifice the victim before him, and all that he waited for, was a favorable opportunity or a plausible excuse for carrying into execution his purpose.

In reply to his inquiries, Christ, in a calm and

dignified manner, answered: "I spake openly to the world. I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret I have said nothing." The question of the high-priest seemed to carry with it the insinuation, that Christ had some secret plans or wicked plots against the authorities of the nation, to accomplish. As there was no specific charge that could be brought against him, this artifice was resorted to, as a means of concealing the real state of the case.

But Christ at once appeals to his public teachings and public career, for proof of his innocence of so base a charge. He declares that he taught not only in the synagogue, but in the temple whither the Jews always resort. For three years he had been in the habit of proclaiming his doctrines in the most public manner. Large assemblies of the Jews had listened to his discourses and his discussions upon the various topics of biblical knowledge. Indeed, there were men present in this very council, with whom he had discussed the doctrines of theology. And if they know of any thing objectionable in his teachings, or in his life, why do they not speak out, and at once accuse their victim? If they have any thing to say, why do they not embrace this favorable opportunity? The victim is before them bound, and completely in their power. Most of his followers, panic-struck, have fled. One apostle has turned traitor, and another is just outside the door denying his Lord with oaths and curses. If they have any real accusation to bring forward, certainly now is the time to produce it. But the dignified hypocrites are

all silent. There comes no voice from the whited sepulchres; the dead men's bones cannot speak. No one in the council can utter even a plausible falsehood against the Saviour.

Then Christ, after explicitly stating that in secret he had said nothing, inquired of the high-priest, "Why askest thou me?" "Why do you put such questions to one who has been arrested as a criminal or an outlaw?" "Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them; behold, they know what I have said." Now this was certainly fair and honorable. There were hundreds of persons in Jerusalem, friends and foes, who had often listened to his teachings, and who might be brought on to the stand, and be made to testify in the case.

When, however, he had thus spoken, one of the officers, probably observing the great embarrassment into which the Sanhedrim was thrown, by the evident innocence and fairness of their victim, and boiling over with rage at seeing how little progress the learned judges were making in the case, turned round and struck the Saviour a blow in the face, saying, answerest thou the high-priest so? Such an act was not only a gross outrage upon Christ, but it was in direct violation of the rules and usages of the court. Yet it illustrated a principle in human nature which we often see acted upon, under similar circumstances. When wicked men cannot meet the arguments of eminent benefactors, or the earnest defenders of God's truth, they usually resort to violence, and make up in blows and tortures what they lack in sound evidence. The inquisitions of the

Romish church, and, indeed, all forms of persecution, are based upon this idea. The judges, seated in dark, inquisitorial halls, fit suburbs of the bottomless pit, are surrounded with their instruments of torture, to be used in accomplishing their ends, when justice and right fail them.

But, observe the spirit of meekness and submission with which Christ received the insult. He simply replied, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" Probably the members of the Sanhedrim were in hopes that Christ would in some way resent the insult, and thus give them the opportunity of accusing him, and of relieving themselves from the awkward position which they occupied. But being disappointed in this, their next step was to seek false witnesses who would testify against him, and thus give to their proceedings some show of justice. For, although they were in great haste to have Christ executed before the feast, yet they were anxious to protect the influence and authority of their court, which had so long occupied so conspicuous a position in the affairs of the Jewish nation. But, notwithstanding they opened the way for the most infamous wretches in the kingdom to bear witness against Christ, yet they could not find any who agreed in their testimony, or furnished evidence suited to their purpose. At last two false witnesses presented themselves, who, perverting language which Christ had used respecting his death and resurrection, declared upon oath, "this fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." But, besides the want

of agreement in the testimony of these two witnesses, the accusation could amount to nothing more than a charge of boasting, or the use of an allegorical expression.

However, the council were resolved not to be baffled in their endeavors to destroy the victim of their malice and jealousy. Accordingly, in the morning they assembled again, and after the most false and trivial accusations had been brought against Jesus, the high-priest, probably hardly knowing what course to pursue, stood up, and said to Jesus, "Answerest thou nothing? What is it that these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace and answered nothing," for the plain reason that there was nothing which deserved an answer. No real crime had been brought against him. His whole life had been searched; false witnesses had been invited to take the stand and perjure themselves, and yet nothing could be found that was in the least degree injurious to his character. No one could prove that he had taught a single false doctrine, — or interfered with the rights of a single individual, or manifested the least ambition, or committed an act worthy of censure.

The high-priest, however, becoming every moment more anxious to bring the trial to a close, said to Christ, "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Messiah, the Son of the blessed God?" Jesus replied, "Thou hast said right, I am." And "I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of

heaven." Then, at the call of the whole council, Christ, unwilling to retract or to violate the truth, even to avert from him the impending destruction, reaffirmed his Messiahship, and his claim to being acknowledged the Son of God.

The high-priest, at once, as though filled with pious horror at what he had heard, rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? This bold utterance of Christ, while it aroused the indignation of his accusers, was at the same time a most solemn and emphatic testimony from his own lips in favor of his divine nature, and the glory of his mission. He doubtless had in his mind that sublime passage recorded in the seventh chapter of Daniel: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven. . . . . And there was given him dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." How intensely interesting is the spectacle here presented of the Saviour, with these sublime images and glorious expectations floating in his mind, while he stands as a bound criminal in the midst of such bitter and implacable foes! While they are in a fever of excitement, thirsting for his blood, and waiting only for an opportunity to crush him, in defiance of all justice and right, he is calmly contemplating the period when he shall appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and his kingdom shall

embrace all the nations, languages, and empires of the earth.

But that which to the Messiah is a glorious reality, is regarded by his persecutors as the grossest blasphemy. The high-priest, in view of it, appeals to the Sanhedrim for their opinion as to the punishment due to such a crime. They declare, on the strength of the testimony which they have heard, that he ought to be punished with death. Accordingly, as no one dares to appear in his defence, or raise even a question as to the right or expediency of such proceedings, they "all condemn him to be guilty of death."

This awful sentence having been passed, the rabble and soldiers, who had the prisoner in custody, rushed upon him, and treated him with the greatest insolence and cruelty. Some even went so far as to buffet him, and spit upon him. In derision of the title which he claimed, they blindfolded him, and then struck him with the palms of their hands, saying, "Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who it is that smote thee." "And many other things, blasphemously spake they against him." Had he been a notorious criminal, or the vilest malefactor, they could not have treated him worse.

The next important scene opens before the judgment hall of Pontius Pilate, the governor. As the Jews, while in subjection to the Roman government, had not the power to put any man to death, they brought Christ before the governor, to induce him to execute the sentence which they had passed. On arriving at the palace, they were so conscientious

that they could not enter in, because it was the residence of a Gentile, and they would be polluted, and thus prevented from eating the remaining sacrifices connected with the passover. They could seize the innocent Jesus, and insult and abuse him; they could devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; they could trample underfoot the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; but they could not step within the door of a Gentile, lest they should be defiled! Pilate, therefore, willing to yield to their religious scruples, came out and managed the case with his usual art. He despised the Jews, and yet wished to retain his popularity among them, particularly as the influence of his administration had been much impaired by several acts of arbitrary injustice. He would gladly have saved Christ from the fanatical opposition which he at once saw was raging against him, and yet he was not the man to sacrifice his personal interests to the claims of justice, or the rights of innocence.

His first inquiry was, "What accusation bring you against this man?" They replied, "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee." Without specifying any particular charge, they make this general statement, deeming it enough to warrant the interference of the governor. But he, not caring to assume any responsibility in the case, directed the accusers to take him and judge him according to their own law. But they said, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." We have tried this malefactor and condemned him, and

now we bring him to you to execute the sentence. But still the question presses, what is the crime of which he is guilty? The deputies of the Sanhedrim, knowing that a heathen ruler would not sympathize with them in their religious difficulties, at once changed the ground of their opposition, and had the audacity and wickedness to frame the following charge: "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, that he himself is Christ, a King." This accusation, they supposed, would excite the jealousy of Pilate, and win him over to their cause. To this charge, the chief priests and elders added others, and such was their violence and intense excitement, that Pilate felt that he must take some action in the case. He therefore called Jesus into the Pretorium, and asked him, saying, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" In reply, he assured him that he was, in a certain sense, a King; but he added, "my kingdom is not of this world." "I am not guilty of the charge of having interfered with the civil affairs of this country, nor is it my purpose to build up a worldly empire. My kingdom is a spiritual one, established and to be carried forward by spiritual means. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Such was the noble declaration of the Messiah, while standing in the presence of the heathen ruler. Under no circumstances does he forget the sublime objects of his advent to earth. He came to bear witness, not only to the particular truth that he was the King of the Jews, but to all truth, — to the doctrine of a

spiritual Deity, — to the great principles of right, justice, and mercy, — to the reality of a future life, and a blessed immortality. He came to dissipate the darkness of error, to fill the moral firmament with stars of hope, to pour upon the world the effulgence of divine and everlasting truth.

After this interview with Christ, Pilate returned to the people who had been waiting to learn the result of the examination, and said, "I find no fault at all in this man." This announcement, so contrary to their expectations and wishes, filled them with the greatest rage. "They were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, to this place."

The allusion to Galilee induced Pilate to send Christ to Herod, who had jurisdiction over that country. Thus he hoped to pacify the people, and to be relieved from the responsibility of deciding a case of so much perplexity. Herod, who had heard of the fame of Christ's miracles, was very anxious to see him, and to satisfy his curiosity in witnessing the displays of his wonderful power. But, the Saviour had no disposition to present before this wicked prince the evidences of his real character and divine origin. He had never, as we have seen, wrought a miracle merely to satisfy a vain curiosity, and certainly, in this case, he was resolved not to cast pearls before swine. Even the questions which were put to him, he did not answer, for he well knew the spirit which prompted them. Herod, therefore, having in mockery arrayed the prisoner in a gorgeous robe, and exposed him to the derision of

his soldiers, sent him back to Pilate, regarding him as a religious enthusiast, rather than a criminal worthy of punishment. Pilate, baffled in his plans to get rid of the case, and yet more convinced than before of the innocence of Christ, again assured the people, that after an examination by himself, and also before Herod, nothing was found in the man worthy of death. But, as the excitement and opposition continued without abatement, Pilate resorted to another expedient by which he might formally recognize the validity of the sentence pronounced by the Sanhedrim, and yet save the innocent sufferer from death.

It was usual at the feast of the passover, for the Roman governor to release to the people any one prisoner whom they might desire, whatever might be the crime charged against him. It appears that they had in custody "a notable prisoner, named Barabbas, which lay bound with them, who had made insurrection in the city, and who had committed murder in the insurrection." This man was publicly known as an infamous robber, who had infested the highways, and was one of the most dangerous men to be at large in society. When, therefore, as was the custom, the people called upon Pilate to release to them a prisoner, he asked them whom they would have, Barabbas or Christ? He probably selected Barabbas, supposing that his notorious villany would render it beyond the limits of possibility that the people should call for him. But listen to the astounding result. The Evangelists inform us that the chief priests and elders moved and persuaded the

people that they should ask that he should release Barabbas unto them, and destroy Jesus. They therefore cried out at once, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. The heathen ruler, shocked at their barbarity and cold-hearted cruelty, said, What will ye, then, that I shall do with Jesus? And they all cried out again, saying, "*Crucify him.*" But Pilate, still determined to do all in his power to save one, of whose innocence he was thoroughly convinced, asked them, why commit so inhuman an act? "What evil hath he done?" The mob, by this time, having become furious with rage, and forgetting even the forms of law, and trampling under their infidel feet all justice and mercy, cried out, "crucify him, crucify him!" They had got beyond the point of even considering or caring whether their victim was guilty or not. They preferred Barabbas with all his crimes, with his character black with the guilt of murder, rather than the pure, the innocent, the holy Jesus. And this, too, in the name of religion! The infuriated wretches were sustained and urged on by the chief priests and elders of the Jewish church! What a chapter in human depravity do we read here!

But even its darkest pages we have not yet opened. There is another scene in this terrible tragedy, even before we reach the crucifixion.

Pilate, though a pagan, made one more effort to save the life of Jesus. As a last resort, with the hope of appeasing the rage of the infuriated mob, he ordered Christ to be scourged. In accordance with the order the soldiers seized him, dragged him

into the common hall, and after heaping upon him every indignity, they platted a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They then smote him, and inflicted upon him a variety of cruel punishments.

While this was transpiring, the mind of Pilate was agitated by a message which he received from his wife. She "sent to him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." Pilate, therefore, went into the hall, and observed with strong emotion the insults and tortures which Christ had suffered, and the severity with which he had been scourged by the soldiers. Thinking that the view of his lacerated body, and his blood-stained robe would move his persecutors and cause them to relent, he brought him forth and said, "Behold the man." "Look upon your victim, dejected, tortured, faint from loss of blood, and the pains which he has suffered. Has he not endured enough? Shall I not now release him?" Imagine the eager crowd looking up and gazing intensely upon the sufferer. But, lest the spectacle should excite their sympathy and cause them to relent, the chief priests and the officers with them, were the first to break the silence and to cry out, "Crucify him, crucify him."

Pilate, justly indignant at this reply, said, "Take ye him and crucify him, for I find no fault in him." "The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." This declaration so excited the fears of Pilate, that he sought another interview with Christ, and then continued his efforts to save him.

But the persecutors plied him with other arguments, saying, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." When Pilate heard that declaration, he was still more alarmed, thinking, probably, that his conduct in this affair would be represented at Rome, and that he might be deprived of his office. He therefore had Jesus brought forth again, and the very sight of him caused the wretches who thirsted for his blood to cry out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him."

It was now apparent that further effort to save the innocent sufferer would be of no avail. And "when Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it." "Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us and on our children." Horrible, horrible imprecation! It is difficult to conceive of an utterance more awful. We cannot contemplate it without shuddering! The chill and horror of the grave seem to be upon the very words.

Then Pilate released to them the infamous Barabbas, and delivered Jesus to be crucified. Although he had struggled long to save Christ, yet, at last, his selfishness was stronger than his sense of right and justice.

# XXII.

## THE CRUCIFIXION.

"And he, bearing his cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified him, and two others with him."—St. John xix. 17, 18.

"By the dark stillness brooding in the sky,
Holiest of sufferers! round thy path of wo,
And by the weight of mortal agony
Laid on thy drooping form, and pale meek brow,
My heart was awed; the burden of thy pain,
Sank on me with a mystery and a chain."

In approaching the crucifixion of our Lord, I feel the inadequacy of human language to portray the thrilling and momentous scenes connected with this event. Its various features are so marked and peculiar, and so interwoven with the highest interests, as well as different destinies of the human family, that no descriptions of mine, at least, can do the subject justice. Indeed, human thought, probably, can penetrate but a short distance into the mysteries and results of this solemn tragedy. The very details of

the process of the crucifixion, are most shocking to a sensitive spirit. The developments made of human passions and depravity, are such as excite in the ingenuous heart, the most intense indignation. But, when we think of the character of the sufferer, — when we connect his exalted nature with such indignities, his sublime and infinite attributes with such treatment, his benevolent and glorious mission with such cruelties, the mind is overwhelmed with emotion. The more we contemplate the crucifixion of the Son of God, the greater is our amazement that such fiendish passions and divine virtues should meet upon the same spot, and mingle in the same picture. We scarcely know which most astonishes us, the ingratitude, perverseness, and cruelty of man, or the condescension and love of the Son of God. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness." Great is the mystery of an incarnate Deity, — of the mercy of an offended Sovereign, — of the love of a crucified Redeemer!

The sentence of death having been passed upon Christ, his enemies proceeded to the work of execution. The form of punishment decided upon, was one of the most painful and ignominious that was known to the Jewish or Pagan world. It was practised upon slaves and notorious malefactors, and was common among the Romans, Egyptians, Persians, and Greeks. It was everywhere regarded as the fullest expression that could be made towards an individual, of his disgrace and infamy. Cicero speaks of crucifixion, as a most horrid and cruel punishment, and one that must be far, not only from the

body of a Roman citizen, but from his eyes and his thoughts.

Our blessed Lord having been scourged and treated with every mark of cruelty and contempt that the malice of his enemies could devise, was led forth to suffer death. Besides the officers and soldiers, and a large company of friends and foes who accompanied him, two notorious thieves were led forth with him, in order that his disgrace might thereby be increased, and the prejudice of the public be the more inflamed against him. As a part of his punishment, he was made to bear his own cross, or at least the transverse beam of it, to which his sacred body was to be nailed. Although we cannot now determine, with accuracy, the path which the multitude pursued on their way to Calvary, yet an able commentator informs us that "the Street of Grief, or Dolorous Way, derives its appellation from its being the supposed site of the street through which the chief priests and elders, after binding Jesus, led him away and delivered him to Pontius Pilate. It proceeds from the gate of St. Stephen, up to an archway, which appears to have been at one time called 'the Gate of Judgment,' because malefactors were anciently conducted through it to the place of execution. At the period of the crucifixion, this gate stood near the western wall of Jerusalem; but now it is in the centre of the city. The wall, above the archway, is supposed to have formed a part of the house of Pilate; and the central window is reported to have been the place whence our Saviour was shown to the people. The street rises with

a gradual ascent towards Calvary, where it terminates."

We may, in imagination, behold the Saviour, in the midst of the infuriated mob and cruel soldiers, toiling up this ascent, and scarcely able to endure the burden which has been placed upon him. Exhausted by the tortures which he has endured, faint from the loss of blood, and smarting under his wounds, he at last sinks to the ground, unable to advance another step. His groans, and the agony depicted upon his countenance, call forth fresh insults, and expressions of contempt from his persecutors. He is goaded on by them, until at last, convinced that it is not possible for him to proceed, they called one Simon, a Cyrenian, who happened to be passing by, to bear the cross.

This Roman custom of compelling the malefactor, or slave, to bear his own cross, was attended with so much cruelty and infamy, that "cross-bearing" became a term of the greatest reproach among the Romans. Plutarch makes use of it as an illustration of the misery produced by sin, showing that as every criminal had his own cross to bear, so each act of transgression carried with it its own torment.

It not unfrequently happened, that the poor victim was pushed from one side of the street to the other, by the rabble, and even thrown down by some, while others urged him forward by acts of the grossest insolence and inhumanity. We cannot doubt but that our blessed Lord had heaped upon him, during this journey, every indignity which the hatred and fury of his triumphant foes could devise. Indeed, it is supposed, with much reason too, that the scourg-

ing which he received, and the sufferings which he endured on his way to Calvary, accelerated his death on the cross, and occasioned the surprise which Pilate expressed at his speedy dissolution.

As the divine sufferer advanced towards the place of execution, "there followed a great company of people, and of women which also bewailed and lamented him." It certainly relieves the awful darkness of this picture, and mitigates the anguish of the scene, to know that there were some sincere mourners in this multitude, — some whose lamentations bore witness to the sorrow and affection of their hearts. Nor did their sighs of sympathy and grief escape the notice of Jesus. He knew the source and the depth of this sorrow. As the pious women beheld their Master treated with such insolence and inhumanity, in the very city where he had performed so many acts of kindness, wrought such mighty deeds, and taught such sublime and heavenly truths, they could not restrain their excessive grief. Perhaps there were some in this crowd, who had been restored to health by Christ, or had received their sight, or had been cleansed from the leprosy, and what they witnessed naturally aroused the keenest sorrow and indignation. To see their benefactor arrayed in a scarlet robe, in mockery of his claims, with a crown of thorns that pierces his fevered brow, with a reed in his hand for a sceptre, and on his way to execution, must have drawn floods of tears from even the most insensible of the group. But Christ does not need their commiseration. If he desired pity, the angels of heaven would weep for him. It

he wished to abandon his holy enterprise, and be delivered from the hands of his foes, very speedily might the rabble around him have been exchanged for the brilliant and powerful hosts from his Father's kingdom, who would gladly have rushed to his rescue! Very speedily would the taunts and insults of these wretches have been exchanged for shouts of hosanna to the "King of kings and Lord of lords!" Or even without angelic aid, the being who had instantly, by his power, calmed the elements and called the dead to life, could as easily have sent the living to their graves. Had he chose, he might have spread over every street and habitation of Jerusalem the silence of death. But his benevolent heart was set upon the redemption of a lost world. He saw into the future, and his eye ran along the bright train of results, and the glorious ends which would be attained by the sacrifice that he was making. "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame."

Turning, therefore, to the mourners, he said in mild, yet emphatic tones, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." Weep for the calamities that will befall this city, its towers, temple, and palaces, in consequence of these acts of injustice and cruelty! Weep over the awful fate of its inhabitants; over the fearful agonies which they will suffer, when the storm of divine vengeance shall burst upon them.

And to any, who, in our day, manifest deep emotion in view of the sufferings of Jesus, he would say, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves." Weep

over your sins committed against a just and holy God; over the coldness of your affections towards an infinite benefactor; over the slight impressions that the gospel has made upon your heart. Weep over the prevalence of vice and infidelity in the earth, and over the awful doom that awaits those who are guilty of treading underfoot the Son of God, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace!

The company having arrived at the place of execution, called Golgotha, or the place of a skull, because the bodies of criminals were buried there, they proceeded to the work of crucifying the Lord of glory. It was customary to offer to the criminal a strong wine, mingled with spices, in order to cheer his spirits, and alleviate his sufferings, by blunting the sensibilities. But, as though the soldiers were bent upon aggravating the pains of the Saviour, and manifesting towards him the greatest possible contempt, they offered to him vinegar, mingled with gall. And when he had tasted of it, that he might not seem to shrink from any act of humiliation, he would not drink it. Thus was fulfilled the words of David, as recorded in Psalms lxix. 21: "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink." His friends offered him some wine, mingled with myrrh, thinking that it might serve to allay his pains. But he received it not, being determined to endure, without mitigation, all the agonies of the crucifixion.

The details of this mode of death are too awful, and too harrowing to the feelings, to be even recited. A learned physician, in a treatise upon the subject,

has proved that the tortures of the crucifixion must have been indescribable. "Even the unnatural and constrained situation of the body, with the arms stretched upward, sometimes for days together, must have been an inexpressible torment; especially, as not the slightest motion or convulsion could take place, without causing excruciating pain over the whole body, particularly in the pierced limbs, and on the back mangled by previous scourging. Besides this, the nails were driven through the hands, and sometimes through the feet, exactly in places where irritable nerves and sinews meet, which were partly injured, and partly forcibly compressed, by which the most acute pains must have been excited, and constantly increased. As the wounded parts were always exposed to the air, they became inflamed. The same, also, probably occurred in many other parts, where the circulation of the blood was impeded by the violent tension of the whole body." But we cannot proceed with the particulars of this cruel death; for it is too painful to think of the innocent, the holy, the benevolent Jesus, as enduring such exquisite tortures. The wonder of wonders is, that such a being should be willing to stoop to such a humiliation, and offer himself up as such a sacrifice. Of all Christ's miracles, this is the greatest, the miracle of his love. I can almost conceive of him, as calling the dead to life, and hushing the wild ocean tempest, and giving health to the sick, and sight to the blind, but I cannot begin to measure the length, breadth, height, or depth of this display of love. My reason is staggered, when I am told that this sufferer

is the incarnate Deity, — "God manifest in the flesh." But if angels cannot fathom the mystery, — if they desire to look into its depths, and are not able, much less can feeble man. We must wait, and we are willing to wait, until the light of eternity shall break upon this wonderful spectacle, — until we can see with spiritual organs of vision, some of the glorious results of this divine scheme of redemption. Then may we know somewhat of the fulness of the meaning of that sublime declaration, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The scene before us is thus beautifully described by Croly: —

"City of God! Jerusalem,
Why rushes out thy living stream?
The turbaned priest, the hoary seer,
The Roman in his pride are here;
And thousands, tens of thousands, still
Cluster round Calvary's wild hill.

"Still onward rolls the living tide,
There rush the bridegroom and the bride;
Prince, beggar, soldier, Pharisee,
The old, the young, the bond, the free;
The nation's furious multitude,
All maddening with the cry of blood.

"'T is glorious morn; from height to height
Shoot the keen arrows of the light;
And glorious in their central shower,
Palace of holiness and power,
The temple on Moriah's brow,
Looks a new risen sun below

"But wo to hill, and wo to vale!
Against them shall come forth a wail;
And wo to bridegroom and to bride!
For death shall on the whirlwind ride;
And wo to thee, resplendent shrine,
The sword is out for thee and thine!

"Hide, hide thee in the heavens, thou sun,
Before the deed of blood is done!
Upon that temple's haughty steep
Jerusalem's last angels weep;
They see destruction's funeral pall
Blackening o'er Sion's sacred wall.

"Still pours along the multitude,
Still rends the heavens the shout of blood.
But on the murderer's furious van
Who totters on? A weary man:
A cross upon his shoulders bound,
His brow, his frame, one gushing wound.

"And now he treads on Calvary,
What slave upon that hill must die?
What hand, what heart in guilt imbrued,
Must be the mountain vulture's food?
There stand two victims gaunt and bare,
Two culprits, emblems of despair.

"Yet who the third? The yell of shame
Is frenzied at the sufferer's name;
Hands clenched, teeth gnashing, vestures torn,
The curse, the taunt, the laugh of scorn,
All that the dying hour can sting,
Are round thee now, thou thorn-crowned King.

"Yet cursed, and tortured, taunted, spurned,
No wrath is for the wrath returned,
No vengeance flashes from the eye,
The sufferer calmly waits to die;
The sceptre reed, the thorny crown,
Wake on that pallid brow no frown.

"At last the word of death is given,
The form is bound, the nails are driven
Now triumph, Scribe and Pharisee!
Now, Roman, bend the mocking knee!
The cross is reared. The deed is done,—
There stands Messiah's earthly throne!"

As it was customary, when one was crucified, to place upon the cross an inscription which indicated the crime for which the victim suffered, Pilate caused to be written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, these words: "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." As the cross was near to the city, many of the Jews who had come up to the feast of the passover, observed, while passing by, this inscription, and were greatly enraged. And they were the more excited, because the declaration was made in Greek and Latin, as well as in Hebrew, thus affording to foreigners and strangers who came to the city, the opportunity of reading it. The chief priests, therefore, remonstrated with Pilate, and said to him, "Write not the king of the Jews, but that he said, I am the king of the Jews." "Pilate answered, what I have written, I have written." "You may put what construction you please upon the words, but I shall not alter them." Then the Jews, resolved not to be baffled in their purpose, turned the inscription into ridicule; and passing by they reviled the Saviour, and insulted him in the most blasphemous manner. In derision, they cried out, "Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." The chief priests and rulers also

joined in the outcry, saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot save."

But in the midst of these revilings, the lips of the Saviour are seen to move, and the listener hears this wonderful prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh what a contrast does this petition, so full of meekness, forbearance, and forgiveness, present to the cruel mockings of the infuriated rabble! One would have supposed that such a prayer would have touched the hearts of the persecutors, — that it would, at least, have served as a check to that rushing tide of mockery that was sweeping over the sacred mount. But though it was powerless upon the granite-hearted multitude, yet it comes to us, as a new and striking evidence of the Saviour's love. From that gloomy and horrible spectacle, it seems to rise like an angel form, shedding its light upon the darkness of the scene, as it ascends to the throne of the Father.

There is, however, one in this group, who does not participate in the revilings that are heaped upon the Saviour, — one whose soul is touched by the power of the great atoning sacrifice which is being made. It is a fellow-sufferer; the penitent thief on the cross. After rebuking his companion for joining the rabble in their contempt and blasphemy, "he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." In this simple and affecting petition, there is a distinct recognition of the innocence and claims of the Saviour, and of the strong faith of the suppliant. "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Para-

dise." Thus ready was he to give to the penitent thief the most positive assurance, that on that very day he should be with him in the celestial paradise, participating in the happiness and glory of his everlasting kingdom.

Christ, also, in the midst of his agonies, manifested the tender and affectionate regard which he entertained for his mother. Seeing her with other pious women at the foot of the cross, and observing, also, John, the beloved disciple, in the group, he said to his mother, "Behold thy son." Regard him with all the affection which you have bestowed upon me. And, turning to John, he said, "Behold thy mother." Henceforth let the endearing relation subsist between you of mother and son. And from that period, the beloved disciple took her to his home, and treated her with all the respect and affection due to her personal worth and exalted station.

These acts of mercy and filial love having been performed, there came over the scene a wonderful and supernatural change. An intense darkness rolled in, enveloping not only the sacred mount, but spreading over the whole land, and continuing from twelve o'clock at noon, until three. At the same time there came over the spirit of the Redeemer, a still deeper and more horrible darkness; a darkness which filled his soul with indescribable anguish. He felt the tremendous pressure of the penalty of God's violated law, — that law, the claims of which he had undertaken to satisfy. Looking up to heaven, the throne of his Father seems to be vacant. No comforting angels are around him. No shining hosts, not even

one bright seraph is present to mitigate the darkness of the hour. In the agony of his spirit, he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

As his sufferings drew to a close, he said, "I thirst," when a soldier placing a sponge filled with vinegar upon a reed, put it to his mouth. Having received the vinegar, and thus fulfilled the prophecies relative to his sufferings, he cried out, "It is finished." The great work of man's redemption was completed. All that was shadowed forth in the types and sacrifices of an ancient dispensation, was realized in the mighty events of this hour. The divine law was satisfied, justice vindicated, and an exhibition of mercy made, the glory of which would one day fill the whole earth. "And when he had cried again with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he bowed his head and gave up the ghost."

Then followed a scene of awful solemnity, and terrible grandeur. The heavens were darkened, as though the sun was blotted from the firmament. The earth shook to its very centre. Even the solid rocks* were torn asunder. The dead were startled from their graves, and came forth to gaze upon the wonderful spectacle. They burst the doors of their

* Mr. Fleming informs us that a Deist who was travelling through Palestine, was converted by viewing one of these rocks, which still remains torn asunder; the fissure not being in the weakest part, but across the veins, showing that it was rent in a supernatural manner.

tombs, as forerunners of the general resurrection which would take place when Christ should appear in his great power and glory.

The veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom, thus throwing open the holy of holies, and signifying that the Mosaic ritual was abolished, and the wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles was thrown down. As this took place at the time of the evening sacrifice, the high-priest, Caiaphas, might at that moment have been engaged in burning incense before the veil, and have witnessed the startling indication that his office was abolished, that the ceremonial law had expended its force, and that a new and spiritual system was opening to the world.

The Roman centurion, when he observed the terrible phenomena that accompanied the death of Jesus, and felt the earth trembling and rocking beneath his feet, glorified God, saying, Truly this was a righteous man, this was the Son of God. The soldiers, also, who were stationed to watch the cross, were filled with terror, and acknowledged, "truly this was the Son of God."

"And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned." The conviction now began to flash upon their minds that they had, indeed, crucified the long expected Messiah, — the King of the Jews. They smote upon their breasts, being filled with remorse at what they had done, and fearing the terrible calamities that might befall their nation on account of this awful crime. The

vision of approaching armies, of stormed gates, of falling towers, of frantic thousands rushing through the streets, of the dying and the dead, floated in their imaginations, as they turned and walked away from this mournful spectacle.

# XXIII.

## RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

"And the angel said unto the women, fear not ye for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen." — Matthew xxviii. 5, 6.

The crucifixion of Christ had left the infant church in tears. The bright hopes of the disciples had, apparently, faded away, while their enemies were exulting in their triumph. He who was styled a king, — who came to establish a mighty empire, — who had exercised authority over the elements and powers of nature, was cold and silent in the embrace of death. The excitement attendant upon his mysterious career, wonderful miracles, and sublime teachings, was succeeded by a sudden and dead calm. The faith of all who had believed in him, was greatly shaken. They knew not what course to pursue, nor to whom they could look for counsel or consolation. They knew not but that the next hour, they might be arrested, condemned, and crucified, as the hated followers of him who had been

already sacrificed. The pious women who had confided in the Messiah, and sympathized with him in all his sorrows, were thrown into the greatest perplexity and affliction. Early in the morning of the third day, before the light had dawned, and while the streets were deserted, Mary, with several other devoted women, hastened to the sepulchre, bearing sweet spices and ointments with which to embalm the body of the Saviour. They desired to make some expression of their grief, and of their reverence for the departed Jesus. On their way, they were troubled to know how they could gain access to the tomb, and "they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, for it was very great." They were probably not aware that soldiers had been stationed to guard the sepulchre, and therefore apprehended no obstacles from this source to the accomplishment of their pious purpose.

On reaching the tomb, they were amazed to find that the stone had been rolled away, and that the body of Christ was not to be found. For a short time before their arrival, a great earthquake had taken place, and "the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake and become as dead men." At first, the forms of the angels were not revealed to Mary and her companions, and they naturally supposed that the body of their Lord had been removed from the sepulchre.

Under this impression, Mary hastened back to the city, to communicate the intelligence to Peter and John, and to secure their aid in finding where they had laid her Lord. These disciples, on receiving the startling tidings, hastened without the least delay to the sepulchre, anxious to solve the mystery which hung over the whole event. Entering the tomb, they saw the linen clothes and the napkin lying in an orderly manner, indicating that the occupant had left voluntarily, and with the calmness and composure of one who had awaken from a long sleep. With their minds greatly perplexed, and unable to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion in relation to what had transpired, they returned to the city.

But Mary, unwilling to leave the sacred spot where her Lord had been buried, lingered about the sepulchre, and gave vent to her feelings in floods of tears. In the hope of gaining some satisfaction, she again stooped down and looked into the sepulchre. What was her surprise to behold there two angels, with white resplendent forms, "the one at the head, and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain." With their hearts touched with sympathy, they said, "Woman, why weepest thou?" She replied, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have lain him." At that instant Jesus appeared, though she did not recognize him, and repeated the inquiry, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Having made known to him the cause of her grief, he again addressed her, and from the tones of his voice she discovered that her Lord stood before her Such was the intensity of her emotions,

and her excessive joy, that she could only exclaim, "Rabboni," that is, my Great Master; and, uttering the word, she fell at his feet to embrace him.

The question of the Saviour's resurrection from the dead, is one of vital moment to the scheme of redemption, and to the hopes of mankind. If the narrative which is given by the Evangelists can be relied upon, then is death, that last great enemy, conquered. The gloom of the grave, to all true believers, is dissipated, and they may shout in triumph, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!"

Let us, then, examine some of the evidences by which this great historical fact is supported. It is obvious, that our reliance for proof must be upon the apostles and their companions. We must summon them before us as the witnesses in the case, and judge of the validity and strength of their testimony, on the principles of sound argument.

*In the first place, we would inquire into the character of those who testify that Christ rose from the dead.* Were they honest, upright, sincere men? or have we reason to believe that they deceived the people? In applying to their characters the several tests usually employed in such cases, we can reasonably come to no other conclusion than that these statements are entitled to our confidence. Had they been men whose greatness, or learning, or eloquence gave authority to their words, we might suppose them capable of imposing upon the community. But they were, most of them, illiterate and obscure persons, whose influence grew out of their known

integrity, and their knowledge of the facts in the case. They did not pretend to possess any extraordinary skill in metaphysical reasoning, or in persuading others to believe, contrary to their own convictions; but simply presented the facts and evidence in the case, and left the argument to rest upon its own intrinsic merits. Their writings abundantly prove their honesty and sincerity. The several histories which they have left of the life, teachings, and deeds of Christ, bear the most decisive marks of their integrity. The simplicity and artlessness of the style; the calm manner in which the most extraordinary and stupendous events are related; the readiness with which every thing adverse, as well as favorable to their cause, is related; their own unbelief, and the instances of their unfaithfulness to their Master; the mild language in which the treachery and wickedness of their enemies is recorded, and many other circumstances, show that these are not the writings of impostors. As we read their records and testimony, the conviction is forced upon the mind, that we are reading the writings of honest and candid men.

Such is the nature of a fraud, in a case like this, and such the difficulties in the way of fully establishing it in the minds of the people, that it would be almost, if not quite, impossible for an impostor to proceed many steps without betraying himself, or in some way defeating his purpose. Now the testimony of these disciples was not only, at the time it was given, thoroughly examined, but for ages it has been subjected to the severest scrutiny of both friends and foes. It has been sifted, compared with the tes-

timony of other witnesses, looked at in the light of other facts respecting the life of Christ. The writings of the Evangelists have been compared one with another, and every new investigation has afforded fresh evidence of their credibility. Nor can the position be sustained, which has been by some assumed, that the disciples, though honest, were themselves deceived; that such was their enthusiastic regard for the Saviour, that they were easily deluded. We do not hesitate to affirm, that there is not the slightest ground for the opinion that the disciples were enthusiasts or fanatics. On the other hand, there is the most abundant proof to the contrary. For, on all occasions, we find them slow to believe the doctrines of Christ, and the extraordinary facts in his history. In many instances, it is only by repeated instructions, and by evidence piled upon evidence, that their skepticism is overcome. How often was the Saviour called upon to censure his followers for their unbelief and hardness of heart! What reluctance they manifested to admit any thing that was not sustained by the evidence of facts that were before their eyes! Particularly were they slow to believe the doctrine of Christ's resurrection. Thomas declared that he would not believe unless he saw the Saviour, and put his fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side. And the great majority of the disciples were unwilling to credit the reports which were at first circulated respecting the resurrection. When Christ appeared among them and said, "Peace be unto you," we are told that "they were terrified and affrighted, and

supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." And in order to fully convince them, he called for food and ate before them. The testimony of such witnesses cannot, with any reason, be branded with fanaticism.

Look, in the next place, *at the number and variety of the witnesses.* Christ first appeared to Mary and her companions, who were told to inform the brethren to go into Galilee, where they would see the Saviour. Afterwards he appeared to Peter, James, and the eleven apostles; to the disciples who were on their way to Emmaus; to the apostles at the sea of Tiberias, and at one time to five hundred brethren. St. Luke states, that he "showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs; being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Now, it is not within the bounds of possibility, that so many persons could have been deceived, as the enemies of Christ affirm, by an illusion of the senses. They saw Christ at different times, and under a variety of circumstances, and heard him discourse upon topics relating to his glorious kingdom. The very print of the nails, and the wound in his side, were visible. He ate and drank before his disciples, and they had all the evidence of his presence that they had of the presence of each other. To say, therefore, that so many persons were deceived, and that their testi-

mony cannot be relied upon, is to destroy the foundations of all evidence.

If we consider, too, the fact that these persons announced the resurrection of Christ immediately after the event took place, and in the very city in which Christ had lived and taught, our argument is greatly strengthened. They did not wait until the excitement respecting Christ had subsided, as they would naturally have done, had they been impostors, but at once professed their belief in the resurrection. Neither did they go at a distance from the scene of the Saviour's history, but promulgated this doctrine in Jerusalem, and among the most bitter enemies of Christ. They boldly declared, that He whom the scribes and Pharisees had rejected, who had been arrested, crucified, and buried, had risen from the dead. Nor did they fail to gain, even from among those who had previously hated Christianity, and despised the Messiah, many converts to their doctrine. Only fifty days after the crucifixion, three thousand Jews were convinced of the truth of this, as well as of all the other important facts in the Saviour's history, and they became the zealous advocates of the positions which they had so recently denied. Yes, proud and prejudiced Jews, who were so strongly attached to their ancient faith, and who, a short time previous, would have scorned the idea of being the followers of Jesus, yielding to the array of evidence that was brought before them, and to the influences of the blessed Spirit, became converts to the new religion. Soon after, the lists were swelled by the addition of five thousand more; and, subse-

quently, great multitudes, unable to hold out against the proofs that poured in upon their minds, embraced the truth. They saw that the apostles who contended so earnestly for this doctrine, were men of undoubted integrity, of pure and blameless lives, — men whose principles and teachings were in accordance with their own convictions of duty, and sense of right. Nay more, they saw that they possessed supernatural powers, healed the sick, and restored the lame and blind. They heard them speak in different languages, and elucidate in various tongues, the principles and doctrines of a purer and sublimer faith than philosophers had ever taught, or than they had received from Moses. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, all heard them speak in their own tongues, "the wonderful works of God."

Such proofs, so various, and coming from so many different sources, and so often repeated, could not be resisted. Even the priests, and those high in authority, who did not become converts to Christianity, were forced to give up the argument, and admit the truth of the apostles' declarations. All their efforts to sustain the position, that the body of Christ had been stolen while the soldiers slept, were utterly unavailing. The absurdity of this idea was apparent to every reflecting mind. For as St. Augustine says, "Either the soldiers were asleep or awake. If they were awake, why should they suffer the body to be taken away? If asleep, how could they know that the disciples took it away? How dare they depose that it was stolen?" Besides, is it reasonable

to suppose that a few timorous disciples, who had fled the moment that Christ was arrested, and the boldest of whom had trembled before a maid-servant, and thrice denied his Lord with oaths upon his lips, would dare to attempt to take the body of Jesus, in the face of the armed forces of the kingdom? Would such persons peril their lives in such an undertaking, and one which presented so little hope of success? The very nature of the plea which was urged by the Pharisees and rulers, shows to what an extremity they were driven, in order to resist the proofs that flowed in upon them that Christ had risen from the dead. And they were ready to give to the soldiers large sums of money, to induce them to testify to this falsehood, for they saw clearly, that the resurrection of Christ would place their cause in a far worse position than though they had never arrested or crucified him. They saw that the very measures which they had adopted to crush this new religion, would give to it additional strength; would, perhaps, clothe it with a power that would be irresistible. And at this distance from those scenes, upon the stand-point that we occupy, we can see in how wonderful a manner God caused the wrath of man to praise him; for the course pursued by the enemies of Christianity, resulted in giving to the system a force which enabled it to rise above and overcome the established religious institutions of the Jewish nation, and send forth an influence that is, at this day, felt throughout the civilized world.

But there is another feature in this argument which should not be overlooked, and that is, the fact

that the disciples *could not have been influenced by considerations of personal interest or advantage*, to deceive the people in regard to this matter. They, in common with others, had been looking for a temporal Messiah, who would deliver the nation out of the hands of its oppressors, and restore again the kingdom to Israel. And it was with the greatest difficulty that they could be induced to relinquish this idea, and admit the spiritual nature and ends of Christ's mission. They could not believe that he would die, although he repeatedly predicted it, and labored to prepare their minds for the event. And when the crucifixion was accomplished, and Christ was buried, they considered that their expectations and hopes were buried with him. Entertaining such views and feelings, it was in no respect for their interest to steal away the body of Christ, and pretend that he had risen from the dead.

Besides, what possible hope could they have had, that such a story would be believed by the implacable and hardhearted Jews? These enemies, with the evidences of Christ's miraculous power and holy life and unparalleled benevolence before their eyes, still denounced him as an impious impostor and blasphemer; still pursued him with a degree of malice and rage, that could only be satisfied by the shedding of his blood. And will such men believe a story, circulated by his disciples, that their victim had risen from the dead? Does it fall within the bounds of possibility, that they would credit such a fabrication, when, by so doing, they would virtually renounce their ancient faith, expose

themselves to the public scorn, and acknowledge before God and man that they had murdered the Lord of glory? It is difficult to conceive of a company as embarking in a more hopeless undertaking. There is not the shadow of a prospect of meeting with success. Every thing is against them.

In addition to all this, there was no imaginable advantage to be gained by the disciples, in pursuing such a course; on the contrary, they staked every thing that was dear to them. They were fully aware of the state of public feeling respecting those who were in any way connected with Christ; and they knew that dungeons, tortures, and the worst forms of persecution awaited those who should attempt to impose such a deception upon the people. They knew that they had nothing to gain, but every thing to lose. They were not madmen nor fanatics. They were not disposed to peril their reputation, happiness, and lives in a visionary and wild enterprise. If they faced the rack, and prisons, and storms of persecutions, it was because they were fully convinced that their Master had risen from the dead. The evidences of this great truth were before and within them, and no persuasion, or alarm, or threats, could induce them to relinquish the position which they had taken. They could die, but they could not and would not sacrifice the truth.

This doctrine, then, of Christ's resurrection, sustained by such incontrovertible proofs, looms up as one of the most important and glorious facts in the history of our Saviour. As a miracle, it eclipses all that preceded it. As a doctrine, it is full of the

richest consolations and most sublime hopes to the believer. As a testimony in favor of the divine mission of the Saviour, it stands impregnable. After the night of gloom that followed the crucifixion, this doctrine rose upon the world, with the brightness and splendor of a morning sun, shedding its light upon the past, and pouring its glory through the ages of the future. We stand to-day in the light of this great truth. It demands our faith. Indeed, we are personally interested in it. For it bears upon the doctrine of our own resurrection. The fact of our death is certain. Is our resurrection as certain? That is the question of questions to us. Will this sleep of death be broken? Will the sound of the archangel's trump be heard in the cold, dark, long silent tomb? An inspired apostle has answered in these sublime words, "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. For this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

# XXIV.

## THE WALK TO EMMAUS.

"And their eyes were opened, and they knew him: and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"—Luke xxiv. 31, 32.

This passage will be recognized as a part of the interesting account we have of Christ's walk to Emmaus, with the two disciples, after his resurrection. These brethren, previous to their departure from Jerusalem, had heard the report which was current, that Christ had risen from the dead. Being the warm and intimate friends of the Saviour, they naturally made this event the topic of earnest conversation. They discussed the probabilities of the truth of the report; compared what they had heard, with the prophecies which Christ had uttered respecting his resurrection; and reviewed the life, teachings, and mighty deeds of him who had fallen a victim to the rage of his enemies.

While absorbed in their discussions, and perplexed by the dark mysteries that overhung the events

which had transpired during the past three days, Christ joined them in the road, as one who had just come from Jerusalem, and was travelling in the direction in which they were going. The disciples did not, at first, recognize who he was; for we are told that "their eyes were holden, that they should not know him." Through some secret, yet powerful influence exerted upon their vision, in connection, probably, with Christ's peculiar and supernatural appearance, they were prevented from clearly discerning him.

The precise nature or character of Christ's body after the resurrection, we cannot fully determine. Some writers of acknowledged ability have taken the ground, that he appeared with a purely spiritual body, bearing, however, such a resemblance to his natural body, as to be recognized by his disciples. Others argue, that the same body that was crucified and buried, rose from the tomb and appeared to the disciples. To support the first position, reference is made to the fact, that Mary did not know Christ when he spoke to her at the sepulchre, and also to the remarkable instance which occurred in the walk to Emmaus. In this case, Christ continued with the two disciples for a considerable length of time, and conversed with them. Indeed, he argued the point of the resurrection with them, and entered into an elaborate exposition of the passages of Scripture which relate to his mission, sufferings, and death. Yet it was not until they had reached the end of their journey, and entered a house and sat down to partake of food, that "their eyes were opened and

they knew him." And as soon as they recognized him, it appears that he vanished out of their sight.

Soon after, he appeared in an assembly of the apostles while the doors were shut. His sudden and unexpected presence so startled them, that they were terrified, and supposed that they saw a spirit. But he said to them, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts, or doubts arise in your hearts?" He then proceeded to prove to them that it was not an apparition which they saw, but that he was in reality present with them; and the evidences which he adduced, furnish, in connection with some other circumstances, the ground of the position maintained by many, that his risen body was the same that was crucified and buried. Amid the conflicting views which have been advanced upon this subject, and the inherent difficulties connected with it, it seems to me to be the most prudent course not to attempt to settle the precise nature of Christ's risen body. That there was, in his intercourse with his disciples, a marked difference in his appearance before and after the resurrection, no one can deny. It is natural to suppose that the body must have undergone some changes in its passage through the regions of death; but without speculating upon the nature of those changes, it will be more to our profit to seek instruction from the scene before us.

The circumstances that attended this interview with the Saviour, were peculiarly favorable. The village of Emmaus was about seven and a half miles from Jerusalem, and the road to it being com-

paratively little frequented, afforded a suitable opportunity for the most free and uninterrupted conversation. We may imagine the two disciples walking together, far from the noise and distracting tumult of the city, and surrounded by the quiet and beautiful natural scenery that incites to religious meditation. The ties of a warm personal friendship not only unite them, but they are the firm disciples of Jesus. Their conversation turns upon the themes that most deeply interest them. They care little for the vanities of this world, its honors, riches, and transient pleasures. Their minds are upon higher and nobler pursuits. They are men who hunger and thirst after righteousness, — who are seeking first the kingdom of God, — who desire to be led into all truth. They wish to know the true motive and ends of Christ's advent, and to settle the question of his resurrection. We have reason to think that they had higher and more spiritual conceptions of the Saviour, than most of the other disciples, and they wished to remove each other's doubts, and establish each other in the Christian faith. They had probably little idea of a temporal kingdom, or physical conquests, in connection with the Messiah's reign. They loved rather to think of Christ as the Prince of Peace, the bright and morning star, the image of the invisible God, the Lamb of God, the Light of the world. They loved to think of his pure and holy life, his unparalleled benevolence, his rich instructions, his miracles and mighty deeds for the good of mankind. They doubtless recalled on this occasion, many scenes in his history, many instances

of his kindness and love. They could not but have referred also to the ingratitude and perverseness of those whom he had come to bless, — the insults, ignominy, and tortures through which he had passed. The horrors of the crucifixion, with all the attendant circumstances, were fresh in their memory. They could not forget the mockings and scourgings, the nails, the spear, the iron clad soldiery, the malicious populace, the agonizing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Their minds were thus in a state of preparation for an interview with the Lord of glory; and, as the Messiah delights to commune with those who are prepared to receive and welcome him, he drew near to the two pilgrims and engaged in conversation with them. Had they been men whose thoughts and conversation had been upon worldly things, or whose minds had been filled with scepticism, or idle speculation respecting the events in the Saviour's history, he would not have favored them with his presence and instructions. But they were in a state of mind to cordially receive him, to appreciate his teachings, and to receive into good and honest hearts the revelations of divine truth which he might make. Indeed, we have abundant ground for the belief that holy conversation, as well as religious meditation and prayer, attracts the notice and presence of the Deity. The prophet tells us, "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." Wherever and whenever there is suit-

able preparation of heart for a visit from above, God is ready to appear, and impart consolation and instruction. He is confined to no locality, no particular class, or age of the church. The laws of his moral kingdom are as certain and uniform in their operation as the laws in the material universe. His peculiar people, embrace all who love him, who delight to dwell upon his character and perfections, and to converse upon his kindness and tender mercies. The partition wall between Jews and Gentiles is broken down, and all who have the principles of faith, obedience, and love in their hearts, constitute a chosen race, a royal priesthood unto God. The Saviour made to his disciples this precious promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." As though he had said, "I am with you in the house and by the way, — with you to guide your footsteps, to protect you from temptation, to illuminate your minds, and to lead you into all truth." As the sun shines upon the earth, imparting beauty to its landscapes, and verdure to its fields, so Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shines upon the pathway of the true Christian, revealing to him the beauties of the moral kingdom through which he passes, and guiding his footsteps towards the celestial city.

Perceiving the nature of the disciples' discussions, and their reluctance to admit the fact of the resurrection, with the evidences that were before them, Christ at first reproved them by saying, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered

these things, and to enter into his glory?" He then proceeded to lay before them a full and accurate exposition of the passages in the ancient Scriptures which related to himself. Beginning with Moses, and going through with all the prophets, he explained in clear and eloquent language, and in a most impressive and convincing manner, the revelations which had been made respecting himself. Could this conversation have been recorded, and preserved for the benefit of the church, it would doubtless have been as valuable a document as the sermon delivered on the mount. We should have prized it as a divine commentary upon the most important portions of the Scriptures. It would have been an authority to which we should have appealed for the settlement of controverted points, and of the meaning of obscure passages. It would have been a revelation upon a revelation, — divine light added to divine light, — the Deity himself condescending to explain his own words, uttered ages ago through his inspired servants. But, for wise reasons, we are not favored with a record of that divine exposition. Perhaps it is better for us to investigate for ourselves; to search the ancient Scriptures, and see wherein they testify of Christ. We are assured that the Old Testament is a mine rich in golden truths respecting the Messiah, and God has given us reason, judgment, conscience, an inward sense of what is right, just, and true, so that we can interpret the meaning of language, compare passage with passage, and the prophecies with the facts in the history of Christ. And he who thus uses his powers, to the extent of his advantages and

ability, will not be deprived of the help of a divine exposition. For Christ will favor him as he did the two disciples, will walk with him and impart a divine illumination. There will be added to the knowledge gained by his own toil, a divine light that will render his course "like the shining light that shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day." Christ, in his farewell discourse to his disciples, said, "When the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." He will illuminate your understandings, dissipate your doubts, solve the mysteries that obscure your spiritual vision, kindle the fires of a holy devotion and spiritual ardor, that no floods can quench, nor waters drown. Nor do we lack witnesses of the faithfulness of Christ in fulfilling his promises. For in every age there have been saints who have enjoyed this divine illumination; who have been rewarded for their toil to reach the summits of the mountains of faith, by being permitted to breathe a celestial atmosphere, and behold with a clear vision those glorious truths that are hidden from the view of the multitude who remain in the valleys of indifference and unbelief.

But, let us look for a moment at the line of argument which the Messiah pursued in this memorable conversation with the disciples. He went back to Moses, who wrote fifteen hundred years before the Christian era, and who predicted that "the seed of the woman should brüise the serpent's head;" that "the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-

giver from between his feet, till Shiloh come." He doubtless referred to the promise made to Abraham, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed; and to the assurance given that the Lord God would raise up a Prophet,* unto whom the people would hearken. Having explained these passages, we may imagine the Great Teacher taking the earnest listeners through the Psalms of David, and first calling their attention to the second Psalm, which is an inauguration hymn, prepared to be sung at the coronation of the Son of God upon the holy hill of Sion. There is a fulness of meaning, and a majesty and glory in the words repeated by Christ himself, as though coming from the Father. "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Next, he refers to a passage in the sixteenth Psalm, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption:" a passage directly applicable to the point under discussion; and one that furnished the text for Peter's discourse on the day of Pentecost, a discourse which was blessed to the conversion of three thousand souls. The twenty-second Psalm could not have been overlooked, a portion of the language of which Christ appropriated to himself on the cross, when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" The vivid description given in this Psalm of Christ's intense sufferings,

*Deuteronomy xvii. 15.

must have been dwelt upon with peculiar force, and also the prophetic declaration in the eighteenth verse, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." So of the prophecies and allusions in the fortieth Psalm, the forty-fourth, the sixty-eighth and ninth, the hundred and tenth, and others. They all furnished abundant and rich materials for the discourse of the Saviour, and in the hands of a divine commentator we do not wonder that they carried conviction and joy to the minds of the hearers.

But, as Christ in the prosecution of his argument entered upon the prophecies of Isaiah, who is justly called the evangelical prophet, how must his language have glowed with a supernatural fervor and divine eloquence! With what a deep pathos, and an overpowering strain of close reasoning must he have followed the prophet's description of his birth, life, mighty deeds, sufferings, and death! We may almost hear the sublime words as they fall from his lips, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace." With what force does he then appeal to his career, as an accurate fulfilment of the fifty-third chapter, in which we read, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him. . . . . Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . . He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the

slaughter, and as the sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." When the disciples perceived the bearing of these prophecies, uttered seven hundred years before, upon the history of Jesus, they could not but have been amazed at their previous slowness of heart, in believing all that the prophets had written concerning him. This argument, coolly examined by the Christian under any circumstances, carries with it an irresistible power. But, glowing with the beauty and fervor imparted to it by divine lips, it could not fail to be deeply impressive. The pious travellers saw its force as they had never seen it before. They saw, too, in a new light, the whole of the ancient Scriptures, — the harmony of the writers, the unity of design that pervaded all the manuscripts. Around the sacred writings there shone a divine light, that revealed their beauties, excellences, and glories. The disciples saw how wonderfully the divine attributes of wisdom and goodness were displayed in God's dealings with mankind. The plan of redemption appeared clearer to their minds than ever before. Its spiritual nature, its provisions for satisfying the demands of the law, the vast reach of its benevolent designs, the necessity that Christ should suffer and die to bring the scheme to perfection, were points upon which they were specially enlightened.

But we hasten to speak of *the effects of this discourse upon their minds.* This is given in their own language, for they said one to another, "Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Their emotions were such as they had never before experienced. They were filled with an intense love for the Saviour, a burning enthusiasm for his cause, and a strong and holy regard for divine truth. No sooner did they discover who it was that had been so eloquently addressing them, than they hasten back to Jerusalem to assure the apostles that they had seen Jesus. Their faith was confirmed not only in the doctrine of the resurrection, but in all the doctrines of the Christian system. They saw that Christ was the all in all, — the chiefest among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely. The glories of divine truth opened before their minds in all their splendor. The dark clouds that hung around their pathway on the morning of that memorable day, were all dissipated. The Sun of Righteousness rose upon them never again to set.

Their gratitude and love were also awakened. They could not but have felt under the greatest and most lasting obligations for the divine condescension which had been shown towards them. They had walked with the King of kings and Lord of lords. They had listened to the instructions of Him who is now exalted far above all principalities and powers, and has a name that is above every name.

Their joy, too, was excessive. No language could express it. Their hearts burned within them while the Saviour talked with them, and opened to them the Scriptures. They had, doubtless, a foretaste of the rapture and glories of heaven. And now, from the heights of the celestial city, they look back upon that day as the most blessed of their lives. For not

only had their Saviour risen, but he had opened to them the Scriptures. They had enjoyed the sweetest and most delightful intercourse with him. The very road to Emmaus was sacred in their estimation, for it bore the footprints of the Lord of glory.

"Abide with us — the evening shades
Begin already to prevail;
And as the ling'ring twilight fades,
Dark clouds along the horizon sail.

"Abide with us — the night is chill;
And damp and cheerless is the air:
Be our companion, stranger, still,
And thy repose shall be our care.

"Abide with us — thy converse sweet
Has well beguiled the tedious way
With such a friend we joy to meet,
We supplicate thy longer stay.

"Abide with us — and still unfold
Thy sacred, thy prophetic lore;
What wond'rous things of Jesus told!
Stranger, we thirst, we pant for more.

"Abide with us — and still converse
Of him who late on Calv'ry died,
Of him the prophecies rehearse;
He was our friend they crucified."

*Raffles.*

# XXV.

## CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

"And it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." — St. Luke xxiv. 51, 52.

We now approach the closing scene in our Saviour's earthly career. The great objects for which he left his throne of glory and became incarnate, had been accomplished. His holy life was before mankind as their great example. He had unfolded his system of truth, which, as a mighty moral force, was destined to renovate and bless society. His church was established, — the apostles commissioned, — the divine aid pledged to all true believers, and the last great command given to his followers. He had laid the foundations of a new and spiritual empire, — an empire that would rise upon the ruins of all hostile kingdoms, and extend over the continents and islands, until every knee was made to bow, and every tongue acknowledged the authority of the Supreme King.

And now the hour had arrived when Christ must bid farewell to his disciples, and return to the courts of his Father. He had remained upon the earth forty days after his resurrection, in order that this fact in his history might be established beyond all doubt. At the expiration of this period, he commanded his disciples not to depart from Jerusalem but to remain and prepare their minds, by public devotion and private prayer, for the glorious event which was about to take place. They were to wait, too, for the fulfilment of the promise of the Father, that they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. This promise had been repeatedly made to them, to console them under the departure of their Lord. Just before the ascension, Christ said to his disciples, "For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." "Though I shall be taken from you, and ye shall see my face, and hear my voice, and receive my counsels no more, yet the Comforter will come, who will cheer and refresh you, and guide you into all truth. Heavenly influences will descend and rest upon you, imparting a divine illumination, sustaining you under trials, enabling you to obtain the victory over your enemies, and giving a foretaste of those joys that will be experienced when we meet in a brighter and more glorious state of being." Having thus fortified the minds of the disciples, he led forth the faithful band out of the city, and passing the brook Kedron, came to the Mount of Olives, and paused on the eastern side near the town of Bethany. This mount is described as being about a mile

in length, and seven hundred feet in height; and as affording a most beautiful and magnificent view of Jerusalem and the surrounding country. All the streets, public buildings, and walls of the city are distinctly visible from its summit. Here the Saviour had that memorable view of the city, when his emotions were so intense that he wept over it, saying, "If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace: but now they are hid from thine eyes."

From other points, the views are extremely rich and grand. One traveller says, "We were conducted to the end of a ridge stretching three quarters of a mile from the central height, in order to enjoy the view eastward, which is very extensive. The plains of Jordan, the mountain beyond, the Dead Sea, and the dark and singular chain of mountains on the east of it, were in full view. Some of us thought that we could see the waters of the Jordan: but although this was uncertain, we could easily trace the course of the river through the plain, by the verdure. Beyond it, towered the lofty mountains of Moab, rising peak above peak, in great majesty, including among them Mount Nebo."

Upon this beautiful and sacred eminence, stood the Lord of glory, surrounded by his warm and devoted friends. It was early in the morning, while the dew was fresh upon the trees and flowers, the atmosphere clear and invigorating, and the mountain bathed in the glories of the rising sun. Angels were winging their way towards the summit, to participate in the solemn grandeurs of the hour, and to

attend the great King on his return to his celestial throne. Amid all ranks of spiritual existences, a profound interest was felt in this great occasion.

The Saviour, raising his hands towards heaven, pronounced upon his disciples a divine blessing. While engaged in this benevolent act, — while the words of wisdom and love were falling from his lips, he was suddenly parted from them, and borne away in the clouds towards heaven. As though seated in a glorious chariot, surrounded by myriads of holy and resplendent beings, he ascended far above all principalities and powers, to take his station at the right-hand of God. The disciples gazed upon the spectacle with mingled feelings of wonder, awe, and admiration. They looked, we are told, steadfastly towards heaven, watching the bright crimson cloud, and the form of the Saviour, as they gradually receded from the view, and at last vanished out of their sight.

From what they had seen of Christ's mighty deeds, and especially after his wonderful victory over death and hell, they were in a measure prepared for this sublime termination of his career. But the majesty and glory of the scene surpassed their most vivid conceptions. They were filled, the Evangelists tell us, with great joy. They forgot the sufferings and humiliation of Christ, in the triumphs of this hour. They forgot the mockings and cruel insults of the mob, in the reverence and love manifested towards the Saviour by the angelic hosts. They forgot the toilsome ascent up Mount Calvary, in their enthusiastic rapture at beholding the illustri-

ous ascension of the Lord of glory. They forgot, too, their own trials and dangers. Their souls were lifted above the world, above the influence of its threats, or its hatred. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. One unceasing anthem of praise poured forth from their lips. "And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following." Throughout the Roman Empire they preached the glorious gospel of the blessed God,—their earnest and eloquent words being confirmed by displays of miraculous power.

Among the historical evidences that commend the fact of the ascension to our faith, we might refer to Christ's own predictions of the event. On several occasions he comforted his friends with the assurance, that he was going to prepare a place for them,—a place where their mourning would be turned into rejoicing, where no trials would afflict them, no foes molest them; but where they would breathe an atmosphere of universal love. While exhibiting himself as the bread of life he said, "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before." And on the day of his resurrection he said to Mary, "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." There was also a vital connection between Christ's ascension and resurrection. Had he left the earth in any other than a supernatural manner, the influence of the doctrine of the resurrection would have been at once de-

stroyed. For having risen from the grave, he appeared before his followers as the conqueror of death; as one whose nature was not vulnerable to the darts of the destroyer. He had also proved that he had supreme control over all the elements of nature, — proved the truth of his declaration, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." And shall he, after so triumphant a career, fail at the last? Shall he fail of fulfilling his own predictions, when the failure would be disastrous to his cause, to the hopes of his followers, and to the spiritual interests of the world?

But we have in the Old Testament intimations of the ascension of the Lord of glory. The twenty-fourth Psalm is supposed by distinguished writers to refer to this event. Though written primarily in reference to the removal of the ark of God to Jerusalem, and used, perhaps, when the sacred treasures were deposited in the temple, yet it is the opinion of able commentators that the Jehovah of this Psalm is Christ, and that his entrance into the celestial kingdom, is the event here celebrated. Viewed in this light, the language is in the highest degree thrilling and sublime. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." To have the scene fully before the mind, we must conceive of the Saviour as leaving the earth in a chariot of brilliant clouds, attended by holy angels, and approaching the everlasting gates of the city of God. As they draw near, the angels,

in a chorus of the sweetest melody, summon those who are within the walls to throw wide open the gates and admit the Lord of glory. We must suppose that the occasion attracts a vast multitude, who crowd near to the gates, and upon the walls, and who, in their anxiety to know from whom this summons comes, ask, Who is this King of glory? Who is this distinguished and royal personage, for whom the everlasting gates must be opened? The attendant angels, in tones of joy and exultation, reply, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." The great Conqueror who has obtained the victory over sin, death, and hell, — the leader of the armies of Jehovah, — the founder of a spiritual and glorious empire, he is the Lord of glory. Such is the majesty of the occasion, that the summons and the reply are repeated, when the gates swing open, and the King enters with his vast and brilliant retinue, and takes his seat upon the throne of the universe.

This doctrine of the ascension we regard as a cardinal principle in the system of Christianity. It is the topmost stone of the spiritual edifice which the Saviour erected upon the earth. It is the dome of the great temple to which the nations are invited, and where they will all one day assemble for worship. It is a doctrine in the truth of which we are individually and specially interested. If the angels, for whom Christ had not died, exulted in his entrance into heaven, how much more should we rejoice in this event; we who are the recipients of the rich and priceless benefits that flow from it. Could we fully realize the magnitude and glory of this miracle

of miracles, — this mightiest of Christ's mighty deeds, — could we see its bearings upon our condition and destiny, and upon the divine government, — could we gaze with an undazzled vision upon the glories that it throws over the past history of the Messiah, we should join the angelic hosts in their anthems of praise. One shout of triumph would ascend from the universal church, in honor of the ascension of the Lord of glory.

It is interesting to trace our personal connection with this, as well as every other event and achievement in the history of Christ. For us the Messiah became incarnate, assumed our nature, and exposed himself to the hardships and dangers attendant upon a career in this revolted province of his Father's empire. To furnish us with a perfect example, he lived and was tempted in all points like as we are. Upon the cross, he was our representative, being wounded for our transgressions, and satisfying for us the demands of God's violated law. He entered the grave for us, conquered death and hell for us, and rose from the tomb to establish the fact of our own resurrection. And now, in his ascension, our nature is restored to the position of honor and dignity that it occupied before the fall. The believer may commune with the Deity, as did our first parents in the garden, walk with him, receive his instructions, and those holy influences that he is ready to impart to those who love him. We are warranted in affirming that our nature has, in the person of Christ, ascended to glory; and Christ sitting at the right hand of God, forms the connecting link between divinity and

humanity. He is our representative at the royal courts of heaven, and the language addressed to the Ephesians may be applied to all the disciples; that God "hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus." In this passage we have not only a clear recognition of our connection with the resurrection and ascension of Christ, but a pledge or security that what he accomplished will be accomplished for us; that, though the death sentence is upon the race, and the gloom of the grave must be encountered, yet that the grave will be conquered, and these bodies rise and ascend to glory. The declaration that "God hath quickened us together with Christ," carries with it this pledge. The life principle is virtually imparted to the disciple. As Christ elsewhere expresses the same idea, "He that believeth in me shall never die; because I live, ye shall live also." "Because I ascend in glory to my Father's kingdom, ye shall also ascend in glory. Because I am exalted and enthroned as a King, ye shall be constituted kings and priests unto God."

The nature and grandeur of that exaltation to which Christ has attained, and the splendors that surround him in a glorified state, our imperfect powers do not enable us to comprehend. We must believe, however, that he who wrought such triumphs here, and reflected such honor upon the divine government, and who ascends to receive the rewards

due to his character and achievements, must be surrounded by a glory which cannot be surpassed, and receive an homage which is rendered alone to a divine being. The simple fact that Christ has gone where the attributes of his divinity may shine forth in their full splendor, and where his excellence and holy virtues are universally acknowledged, is enough to convince us of the glory of his exalted position. "What," says one, "though the heavens have received him out of our sight? there have come messages from those heavens informing us of his solemn enthronement as 'King of kings and Lord of lords;' and notes of the celestial minstrelsy are borne to mortal ears, celebrating the son of the virgin as the great 'I am,' who was, and is, and is to come. And it is in consequence of such messages, that thousands and tens of thousands of the inhabitants of this earth bow at the name of Jesus, and that vast advancements have already been made towards a splendid consummation, when the sun, in its circuit round our globe, shall shine on none but the worshippers of the Lamb that was slain."

The Christian, also, should exult in the fact, that Christ by his ascension places himself in a position where he can render to the church more effectual service than though he had remained upon the earth. He is near to the eternal throne, at God's right hand. He is our great advocate before the Father, ready at all times to pour forth his divine eloquence in our behalf, ready to plead his own merits as the ground of our justification and sanctification. He appears in the royal courts of heaven as our representative,

fitted in every way for his exalted station, and qualified to render to every member of the human family the most important and valuable services. He knows, by experience, our necessities; knows the trials and temptations that surround the Christian; the conflicts and struggles through which he must pass to secure the prizes of immortality. He knows, too, just what influences we need to preserve the soul in the hour of danger, to increase our faith, and stimulate us in the divine life.

In this station, he can most effectually fulfil his promise to be with all his disciples, even unto the end of the world. Had he remained upon the earth, he would have occupied but one locality at one time, and would have communicated personally with comparatively but few of his followers. Now, however wide may be his church, or numerous his followers, he can at the same moment watch over their interests, listen to their prayers, and send down upon them the richest of heaven's blessings. As the water is first lifted from the ocean and converted into clouds, that extend over the islands and continents, and thence descends in fertilizing showers, so Christ has ascended far above all principalities and powers, that he may more extensively and abundantly bless his followers. And all who approach him in faith, may partake of the benefits that he is ready to impart.

There is another special reason why we should rejoice in the ascension, and that is, its connection with the gift of the Holy Spirit. "If I go not away," said Christ, "the Comforter will not come

unto you: but if I depart, I will send him to you." Why the departure of Christ was necessary to the descent of the Spirit, we are unable to determine. It is sufficient for us to know the fact, that the ascension was thus connected with the reception of this gift. As Christ had established a purely spiritual empire, and one that was to be advanced by spiritual agencies, it seems in accordance with his plans that he should withdraw his bodily presence, and that the third person of the glorious Trinity should carry forward the great work which he had commenced. In the scheme of redemption, we have thus distinctly developed the agency of each of the persons of the Trinity. Had not the influences of the Spirit been granted, we know not but that the sufferings and death of Jesus would have failed of securing the regeneration and sanctification of men. Such is the extent of the alienation of our race from the Father, and such the depth and strength of human depravity, that the agency of the Spirit was necessary to render operative and effectual the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Without this influence, even the tremendous pressure of motive that comes from Gethsemane and Calvary, — from the teachings of Christ, — from the revelation he made of the eternal world, would not have been sufficient to bring man to the exercise of repentance and faith. The apostles, themselves, who had enjoyed the personal instructions of the Saviour, needed the aid of this Spirit to enable them to maintain their faith amid the bitter storms of persecution that raged around them. They needed it in their struggles against systems of idolatry, and in

their labors to plant among the nations the institutions of Christianity. The sacred historians needed this Spirit to keep them from error, and to guide them into all truth. We need it, to open to our understandings the Scriptures, and to carry home to our hearts those principles that will make us wise unto salvation.

The goodness of Christ, therefore, is displayed in his departure from the earth, as well as in his advent. And we should rejoice that while we have an eloquent advocate at God's right hand, there is also abroad in the earth a converting and sanctifying agency, — a spiritual power that is moving upon the nations, regenerating the hearts of men, and preparing multitudes to ascend to heaven and reign with Christ amid the joys and splendors of his everlasting kingdom.

# XXVI.

## THE WRITERS OF THE GOSPELS AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW.

MATTHEW, supposed to be the same who is also called Levi, son of Alpheus, was by birth a Jew. As to his office, he appears to have been a tax-gatherer under the Romans. He was a native of Galilee, as the rest of Christ's apostles were; but of what city in that country, or of which tribe of the people of Israel, are not known.

As he sat at the custom-house, by the sea-side, in or near the city of Capernaum, Jesus called him; and as soon as he could make up his *accounts* with those by whom he had been employed and intrusted, he became a willing, faithful disciple of Christ. After this, St. Mark tells us, he made an entertainment in his own house, where Christ and several of his disciples were present, together with many tax-gatherers and others, of no very respectable character, in the sight of the Pharisees.

It is probable that Matthew took this occasion of calling together his relatives and acquaintances, that he might take a friendly farewell of them, and give

them the opportunity of seeing and hearing that divine Person, whose words he had already found to be spirit and life to his own soul; and to whose service he had now solemnly dedicated himself.

He was placed by our Lord in the number of his *Apostles*, and continued with him during his life. After the ascension of Christ, he was at Jerusalem, and received the Holy Ghost with the rest of the disciples on the day of Pentecost.

Matthew, with Andrew, Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, are the only disciples whose call is *particularly* mentioned. It is uncertain when, where, or how, he died. There does not appear to be any clear evidence in the writings of the primitive fathers that he suffered martyrdom.

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK.

MARK. This person is the second in the commonly received order of the four evangelists, was named JOHN MARK, and was the son of a pious woman called Mary, who dwelt at Jerusalem; she was an early believer, and the disciples used to meet at her house. Peter, having been delivered out of prison by an angel, came to the house of Mary, mother of John whose surname was Mark. He is generally supposed to have been particularly intimate with St. Peter, to have written his Gospel at ROME, A. D. 64, and to have died at Alexandria in Egypt, in the eighth year of the reign of Nero. Dr. LARDNER has fully proved that *Mark the evangelist*, and *John Mark* nephew to *Barnabas*, were one and the same person.

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE.

Luke was, according to Dr. Lardner, a Jew by birth, and an early convert to Christianity; but Michaelis thinks he was a Gentile. Some think he was one of our Lord's *seventy* disciples. It is worthy of remark, that he is the only evangelist who mentions the commission given by Christ to the seventy, chap. x. 1–20. It is likely he is the *Lucius* mentioned Rom. xvi. 21, and if so, he was related to the apostle Paul, and that it is the same *Lucius* of Cyrene, who is mentioned Acts xiii. 1, and in general with others Acts xi. 20. Some of the ancients, and some of the most learned and judicious among the moderns, think he was one of the *two* whom our Lord met on the way to *Emmaus* on the day of his resurrection, as related Luke xxiv. 13–35: one of these was called *Cleopas*, ver. 18; the other is not mentioned, the evangelist himself being the person and the relator.

St. Paul styles him his *fellow-laborer*, Philem. ver. 24. It is barely probable that he is the person mentioned Colos. iv. 14. *Luke, the beloved physician.* All the ancients of repute agree that he was a *physician*, but where he was born, and where he exercised the duties of his profession, are not known.

He accompanied St. Paul when he first went into Macedonia, Acts xvi. 8–40; xx., xxvii. and xxviii. Whether he went with him *constantly* afterward is not certain; but it is evident he accompanied him from Greece through Macedonia and Asia to Jerusalem, where he is supposed to have collected many particulars of the evangelic history: from Jerusalem

he went with Paul to Rome, where he staid with him the two years of his imprisonment in that city. This alone makes out the space of five years and upwards. It is probable that he left St. Paul when he was set at liberty, and that he then went into Greece, where he finished and published this Gospel, and the book of the Acts, which he dedicated to Theophilus, an honorable Christian friend of his in that country. It is supposed that he died in peace about the eightieth or eighty-fourth year of his age. Some suppose he published this Gospel fifteen, others twenty-two years after the ascension of Christ.

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN.

John, the writer of this Gospel, was the son of a fisherman named Zebedee, and his mother's name was Salome. His father Zebedee was probably of Bethsaida, and with his sons James and John, followed his occupation on the Sea of Galilee. The call of these two brothers to the apostleship is related Matt. iv. 21, 22. Mark i. 19, 20. Luke v. 1–10. John is generally supposed to have been about twenty-five years of age when he began to follow our Lord.

Theophylact makes him one of the relatives of our Lord, and gives his genealogy thus: "Joseph, the husband of the blessed Mary, had seven children by a former wife; four sons, and three daughters, Martha, (perhaps, says Dr. Lardner, it should be Mary,) Esther, and Salome, whose son John was; therefore Salome was reckoned our Lord's sister, and John was his nephew." If this relationship did exist, it may

have been, at least in part, the reason of several things mentioned in the Gospels; as the petition of the two brothers for the two chief places in the kingdom of Christ; John's being the beloved disciple and friend of Jesus, and being admitted to some freedoms denied to the rest, and possibly performing some offices about the person of his Master; and finally, our Lord's committing to him the care of his mother as long as she should survive him.

John was with our Lord in his transfiguration on the mount, during his agony in the garden, and when he was crucified.

He saw our Lord expire upon the cross, and saw the soldier pierce his side with a spear, John xix. 34, 35. He was one of the first of the disciples that visited the sepulchre after the resurrection of Christ; and was present with the other disciples when Jesus showed himself to them on the evening of the same day on which he arose; and likewise eight days after.

Tertullian and others say, that Domitian having declared war against the church of Christ in the 15th year of his reign, A. D. 95, John was banished from Ephesus, and carried to Rome, where he was immersed in a caldron of boiling oil, out of which, however, he escaped unhurt; and that afterward he was banished to the Isle of Patmos, in the Ægean Sea, where he wrote the Apocalypse. Domitian, having been slain in A. D. 96, his successor, Nerva, recalled all the exiles who had been banished by his predecessor: and John is supposed to have returned the next year to Ephesus, being then about ninety years of age. He is thought by some to have been the only

apostle who died a natural death, and to have lived upwards of one hundred years. Some say, having completed one hundred years, he died the day following.

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

The book of the ACTS OF THE APOSTLES forms the *fifth* and last of the historical books of the New Testament.

All antiquity is unanimous in ascribing this book to St. Luke as the author; and from the commencement of it, we see plainly that it can be attributed to no other. See *Life of Luke.*

# XXVII.

## OTHER WRITERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

All the books of the New Testament, from Romans to Hebrews inclusive, were written by that most eminent of all the apostles, St. Paul.

*Saul* (afterward called *Paul*) was born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, of Jewish parents, who possessed the right of Roman citizens: when young he was sent to Jerusalem for the purpose of receiving a Jewish education: he was there put under the tuition of the famous Rabbi *Gamaliel*, and was incorporated with the sect of the Pharisees, of whose system he imbibed all the pride, self-confidence, and intolerance, and distinguished himself as one of the most inveterate enemies of the Christian cause; but being converted by a most singular interposition of divine providence and grace, he became one of the most zealous promoters and successful defenders of the cause which he had before so inveterately persecuted.

Concerning the time, place, and manner of his death, we have little *certainty*. It is commonly believed that, when a general persecution was raised against the Christians by Nero, about A. D. 64, under pretence that they had set Rome on fire,

both St. Paul and St. Peter then sealed the truth with their blood; the latter being crucified with his head downward; the former being beheaded either in A. D. 64 or 65.

Some writers say that it was *not* by the command of Nero that he was martyred, but by that of the *præfects* of the city, Nero being then absent; that he was beheaded at *Aquæ Salviæ*, about three miles from Rome, on Feb. 22; that he could not be *crucified* as Peter was, because he was a freeman of the city of Rome. But there is great uncertainty on these subjects; so that we cannot positively rely on any account that even the *ancients* have transmitted to us concerning the death of this apostle; and much less on the accounts given by the *moderns;* and least of all on those which are to be found in the *Martyrologists.*

## THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES.

*Who* the writer of the epistle in question was, is difficult to say: all that we know *certainly*, is from his own words, that his name was *James*, and that he was a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus. *Two* persons of this name are mentioned in the New Testament; James the son of Zebedee, called also James the elder; and James *the less*, or the *little one*, called the *son of Alpheus*, and *brother of our Lord:* but whether one of these, or, if one of them, *which*, or whether one of the same name, different from both, are points that cannot be satisfactorily determined. Michaelis, who has examined the subject

with his usual ability, leaves the matter in doubt; but leans to the opinion that *James* the *son of Zebedee* was the author, and that this epistle was written *before* any other book of the New Testament. Some great authorities ascribe it to *James*, called the *brother of our Lord*, who was president, or bishop, of the church in Jerusalem.

### THE FIRST AND SECOND EPISTLES OF PETER.

"The land of Palestine," says Cave, "at and before the coming of our blessed Saviour, was distinguished into three several provinces, Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. In the Upper, called also Galilee of the Gentiles, within the division belonging to the tribe of Napthali, stood Bethsaida, formerly an obscure and inconsiderable village, till lately re-edified and enlarged by Philip the Tetrarch; and, in honor of Julia, daughter of Augustus, called by him Julias. It was situated upon the banks of the Sea of Galilee, called also the Lake of Tiberias, and the Lake of Gennesareth, which was about forty furlongs in breadth, and a hundred in length, and had a wilderness on the other side, called the desert of Bethsaida, whither our Saviour used often to retire.

"At this place was born *Simon*, surnamed *Cephas*, or *Petros*, *Petrus*, *Peter*, signifying a *stone*, or fragment of a rock. He was a fisherman upon the forementioned lake, or sea, as was also in all probability his father Jonas, Jonah, or John. He had a brother named Andrew: which was the elder of the two is not certain; for, concerning this, there were dif-

ferent opinions among the ancients. Epiphanius supposed Andrew to be the elder; but, according to Chrysostom, Peter was the first-born. So likewise Bede and Cassian, who even made Peter's age the ground of his precedency among the apostles; and Jerom himself has expressed himself in like manner, saying, 'that the keys were given to all the apostles alike, and the church was built upon all of them equally; but, for preventing dissension, precedency was given to one. John might have been the person, but he was too young; and Peter was preferred on account of his age.'

"Simon Peter was married when called by our Lord to attend upon him; and upon occasion of that alliance, it seems, had removed from Bethsaida to Capernaum, where was his wife's family. Upon her mother our Saviour wrought a great miracle of healing. And I suppose, that when our Lord 'left Nazareth, and came and dwelled at Capernaum,' he made Peter's house the place of His usual abode when he was in those parts."

We have nowhere any distinct account of this apostle's travels.

It is supposed that St. Peter died a martyr at Rome, in the year of Christ 64. See *Life of St. Paul.*

### THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD EPISTLES OF JOHN.

The author is the same who wrote the Gospel.

### THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE.

Jude, the brother of James, is the supposed author of this epistle.

From all the evidence before him, Michaelis concludes that the canonical authority of this epistle is extremely dubious. Others have spoken of it in strains of unqualified commendation and praise, and think that its genuineness is established by the matters contained in it; which, in every respect, are suitable to the character of an inspired apostle of Christ.

### THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

Among the Interpreters of the *Apocalypse*, both in ancient and modern times, we find a vast diversity of opinions; but they may be all reduced to *four* principal hypotheses, or modes of interpretation:

1st. The Apocalypse contains a prophetical description of the destruction of Jerusalem, of the Jewish war, and the civil wars of the Romans.

2d. It contains predictions of the persecutions of the Christians under the heathen emperors of Rome, and of the happy days of the church under the Christian emperors, from Constantine downwards.

3d. It contains prophecies concerning the tyrannical and oppressive conduct of the Roman pontiffs, the true Antichrist; and foretells the final destruction of popery.

4th. It is a prophetic declaration of the schism and heresies of Martin Luther, those called reformers, and their successors; and the final destrution of the Protestant religion.

The first opinion has been defended by Professor Wetstein, and other learned men on the continent.

The second is the opinion of the primitive fathers in general, both Greek and Latin.

The third was first broached by the Abbe *Joachim*, who flourished in the thirteenth century, was espoused by most of the Franciscans, and has been, and still is, the general opinion of the Protestants.

The fourth seems to have been invented by popish writers merely by way of retaliation; and has been illustrated and defended at large by a Mr. *Walmsley*, (I believe,) titular Dean of Wells, in a work called the History of the Church, under the feigned name of *Signior Pastorini.*

In this work he endeavors to turn every thing against Luther and the Protestants, which they interpreted of the pope and popery; and attempts to show, from a computation of the Apocalyptical numbers, that the total destruction of Protestantism in the world would take place in 1825! But this is not the first prophecy that has been invented for the sake of an event, the accomplishment of which was earnestly desired; and as a stimulus to excite general attention, and promote united exertion, when the time of the pretended prophecy was fulfilled.

Who the writer of the Apocalypse was, learned men are not agreed. This was a *question*, as well in ancient as in modern times. Many have attributed it to the *apostle John;* others to a person called *John* the *presbyter*, who they say was an Ephesian, and totally different from John the apostle. And, lastly, some have attributed it to *Cerinthus*, a contemporary of John the apostle, which last supposition is highly improbable, if not utterly impossible.

*Adam Clarke.*

# XXVIII.

## THE RELIGIOUS CREED AND HISTORY OF THE JEWS.

A COMPLETE system of the religious doctrines of of the Jews is contained in the five books of Moses, their great lawgiver, who was raised up to deliver them from their bondage in Egypt, and to conduct them to the possession of Canaan, the promised land.

The principal sects among the Jews in the time of our Saviour, were the Pharisees, who placed religion in external ceremony; the Sadducees, who were remarkable for their incredulity; and the Essenes, who were distinguished by an austere sanctity.

The Pharisees and Sadducees are frequently mentioned in the New Testament; and an acquaintance with their principles and practices serves to illustrate many passages in the sacred history. At present, the Jews have two sects — the Caraites, who admit no rule of religion but the law of Moses; and the Rabbinists, who add to the laws the tradition of the Talmud, a collection of the doctrines and morality of the Jews. The expectation of a Messiah is the distinguishing feature of their religious system. The word *Messiah* signifies one anointed, or installed into an office by an unction.

Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, in whom all the Jewish prophecies are accomplished.

The Jews, infatuated with the idea of a temporal Messiah, who is to subdue the world, still wait for his appearance.

The most remarkable periods in the history of the Jews are the call of Abraham, the giving of the law by Moses, their establishment in Canaan under Joshua, the building of the temple by Solomon, the division of the tribes, their captivity in Babylon, their return under Zerubbabel, and the destruction of their city and temple by Titus, afterwards emperor, A. D. 70.

Maimonides, an illustrious rabbi, drew up for the Jews, in the eleventh century, a confession of faith, which all Jews admit. It is as follows:—

"1. I believe, with a true and perfect faith, that God is the Creator, whose name be blessed, Governor, and Maker, of all creatures, and that he hath wrought all things, worketh and shall work forever.

"2. I believe, with a perfect faith, that the Creator, whose name be blessed, is *one*, and that such a unity as in him can be found is in none other, and that he alone hath been our God, is, and forever shall be.

"3. I believe, with a perfect faith, that the Creator, whose name be blessed, is not corporeal, nor to be comprehended with any bodily property, and that there is no bodily essence that can be likened unto him.

"4. I believe, with a perfect faith, the Creator, whose name be blessed, to be the first and the last, that nothing was before him, and that he shall abide the last forever.

"5. I believe, with a perfect faith, that the Creator, whose name be blessed, is to be worshipped, and none else.

"6. I believe, with a perfect faith, that all the words of the prophets are true.

"7. I believe, with a perfect faith, the prophecies of Moses, our master, — may he rest in peace; — that he was the father and chief of all wise men that lived before him, or ever shall live after him.

"8. I believe, with a perfect faith, that all the law which at this day is found in our hands, was delivered by God himself to our master, Moses. God's peace be with him.

"9. I believe, with a perfect faith, that the same law is never to be changed, nor another to be given us of God, whose name be blessed.

"10. I believe, with a perfect faith, that God, whose name be blessed, understandeth all the works and thoughts of men, as it is written in the prophets. He fashioneth their hearts alike; he understandeth all their works.

"11. I believe, with a perfect faith, that God will recompense good to them that keep his commandments, and will punish them who transgress them.

"12. I believe, with a perfect faith, that the Messiah is yet to come; and, although he retard his coming, yet I will wait for him till he come.

"13. I believe, with a perfect faith, that the dead shall be restored to life, when it shall seem fit unto God the Creator, whose name be blessed, and memory celebrated, world without end. AMEN."

This people constitute one of the most singular and interesting portions of mankind. For about three thousand years, they have existed as a distinct nation; and, what is remarkable, by far the greatest part of this time they have been in bondage and captivity.

The calling of Abraham, the father and founder of this nation; the legislation of Moses; the priesthood of Aaron; the Egyptian bondage; the conquest of Canaan, and the history of the Jews to the coming of the Messiah; their cruel and injurious treatment of this august and innocent personage, — are facts which the Scriptures disclose, and with which, it is presumed, every reader is well acquainted.

For about eighteen hundred years, this wonderful people have maintained their peculiarities of religion, language, and domestic habits, among Pagans, Mahometans, and Christians, and have suffered a continued series of reproaches, privations, and miseries, which have excited the admiration and astonishment of all who have reflected on their condition.

The siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the Roman general, was one of the most awful and distressing scenes that mortals ever witnessed; and the details, as given by Josephus, are enough to make humanity shudder. During the siege, which lasted nearly five months, upwards of eleven hundred thousand Jews perished. John and Simon, the two generals of the Hebrews, who were accounted the ringleaders of the rebellious nation, with seven hundred of the most beautiful and vigorous of the Jewish youth, were reserved to attend the victor's triumphal

chariot. The number taken captive, during this fatal contest, amounted to ninety-seven thousand; many of whom were sent into Syria, and the other provinces, to be exposed in public theatres, to fight like gladiators, or to be devoured by wild beasts. The number of those destroyed in the whole war, of which the taking of the holy city was the bloody and tremendous consummation, is computed to have been one million four hundred and sixty thousand.

In addition to the terrors of the Roman sword, this devoted nation was exposed to famine, pestilence, and the implacable fury of contending parties among themselves, which all conspired together to make the siege of Jerusalem surpass, in horror, every account of any other siege in the records of the world.

A small portion, indeed, of this wretched, ruined nation were permitted to remain, and establish themselves in Judea, who, by degrees, reorganized a regular system of government, which became the centre of Jewish operations, not only for those in Judea, but for such as were dispersed in other nations. But the yoke of foreign masters was so grievous and burdensome, that they were continually restless and impatient; and, in consequence of a general revolt under the Emperor Adrian, in 134, they were a second time slaughtered in multitudes, and were driven to madness and despair. Bither, the place of their greatest strength, was compelled to surrender, and Barchochba, their leader, who pretended to be the Messiah, was slain, and five hundred and eighty thousand fell by the sword in battle, besides vast

numbers who perished by famine, sickness, fire, and other calamities.

Kings have enacted the severest laws against them, and employed the hand of executioners to ruin them. The seditious multitudes, by murders and massacres, have committed outrages against them, if possible, still more violent and tragical. Besides their common share in the sufferings of society, they have undergone a series of horrid and unutterable calamities, which no other description of men has ever experienced in any age, or in any country. Princes and people, Pagans, Mahometans, and Christians, disagreeing in so many things, have united in the design of exterminating this fugitive and wretched race, but have not succeeded. They have been banished, at different times, from France, Germany, Spain, Bohemia, Hungary, and England; and from some of these kingdoms they have been banished and recalled many times in succession.

The Romans and Spaniards have probably done more than any other nations to oppress and destroy this people; and the Inquisition has doomed multitudes of them to torture and death.

At different times, they were accused of poisoning wells, rivers, and reservoirs of water, and, before any proof of these strange and malicious charges was produced, the populace in many parts of Germany, Italy, and France, have fallen upon them with merciless and murderous severity. At one time, the German emperor found it necessary to issue an edict for their banishment, to save them from the rage of his exasperated and unrestrained subjects.

As the Jews have generally been the *bankers* and *brokers* of the people among whom they have resided, and have made a show of much wealth, this has tempted their avaricious adversaries to impose upon them enormous taxes and ruinous fines.

Muley Archy, a prince of one of the Barbary states, by seizing the property of a rich Jew, was enabled to dispossess his brother of the throne of Morocco.

The English parliament of Northumberland, in 1188, for the support of a projected war, assessed the Jews with sixty thousand pounds, while only seventy thousand were assessed upon the Christians; which proves either that the Jews were immensely rich, or that the parliament was extremely tyrannical.

The English King John was unmercifully severe upon this afflicted people. In 1210, regardless of the costly freedom he had sold them, he subjected them all, as a body, to a fine of sixty-six thousand marks. The ransom required by this same unfeeling king, of a rich Jew of Bristol, was ten thousand marks of silver; and on his refusing to pay this ruinous fine, he ordered one of his teeth to be extracted every day; to which the unhappy man submitted seven days, and on the eighth day he agreed to satisfy the king's rapacity. Isaac of Norwich was, not long after, compelled to pay a similar fine. But the king, not satisfied with these vast sums extorted from these injured Israelites, in the end confiscated all their property, and expelled them from the kingdom.

About the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Jews in Persia were subjected to a tax of two millions of gold. Long would be the catalogue of

injuries of this kind which this outcast and hated nation has sustained. Numerous are the cases in which those who have become deeply in debt to them for borrowed money, have procured their banishment, and the confiscation of their property, as the readiest way to cancel their demands; and, as they have ever been addicted to usurious practices, they have, by this means, furnished plausible pretexts to their foes to fleece and destroy them.

The fraternal disposition of this people led them to seek the society of each other; and, notwithstanding the wideness of their dispersion, in process of time, they, by uniting under different leaders, formed two communities of considerable extent, known by the name of the eastern and western Jews. The western Jews inhabited Egypt, Judea, Italy, and other parts of the Roman empire; the eastern Jews settled in Babylon, Chaldea, Persia, &c. The head of the western division was known by the name of the patriarch, while he who presided over the eastern Jews was called the prince of the captivity. The office of patriarch was abolished, by imperial laws, about 429, from which time the western Jews were solely under the rule of the chiefs of their synagogues, whom they called primates. But the princes of the captivity had a longer and more splendid sway. They resided at Babylon, or Bagdad, and exercised an extensive authority over their brethren, as far down as the twelfth century. About this period, a Jewish historian asserts that he found, at Bagdad, the prince of the captivity, lineally descended from David, and permitted by the caliph to exercise the

rights of sovereignty over the Jews from Syria to Indostan.

The existence of a succession of these imaginary potentates, from the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the Jews have ever been strenuous in maintaining, partly to aggrandize their nation, and partly to deprive Christians of the benefit of an argument furnished by the prophecy of Jacob concerning the termination of the Jewish polity and independence, soon after the coming of the Messiah.

Notwithstanding the world, in general, has shown a spirit of hostility and contempt for the remnant of Israel, yet they have found a few, in every age, who, either from motives of policy or justice, have treated them with kindness and respect. The first Mahometan caliphs, a number of the Roman pontiffs, and some of the Asiatic and European sovereigns, have shown them friendship and protection. Don Solomon, a learned and illustrious Jew of Portugal, in the twelfth century, was raised to the highest military command in that kingdom. Casimir the Great, of Poland, in the fourteenth century, received the Jews as refugees into his kingdom, and granted them extensive privileges; and from that time to the present, they have been more numerous in that country than in any other in Europe.

For many centuries, this persecuted race found a favorite asylum in Holland, and, by their dexterity and success in commerce, became very affluent.

Cromwell, seeing the benefit which the Netherlands had derived from this money-making and money-lending community, was very desirous to recall them

to England, from which they had been exiled about three hundred and fifty years. The celebrated Manasses Ben Israel had many interviews with the Protector; and so high were the expectations of the Israelites, from the clemency and authority of this illustrious statesman, that they began to look up to him as the promised Messiah. And, although Cromwell's friendly proposals, as to their recall, were overruled by the bigoted and intolerant policy of the times, yet, from that period, they have found favor and protection in England, and have been much more numerous and prosperous there than formerly.

In France and the United States, the Jews are admitted to equal rights with all other citizens, which cannot be said of any other nations in Christendom. In the United States, they have acquired this freedom, of course, with all other citizens of this free country. In France, they were admitted to it by Bonaparte; and afterwards, in 1807, by his directions, they convened a Grand Sanhedrim, consisting, according to ancient custom, of seventy members, exclusive of the president. The number and distinction of the spectators of this Sanhedrim greatly added to the solemnity of the scene. This venerable assembly passed and agreed to various articles respecting the Mosaic worship, and their civil and ecclesiastical concerns.

The extreme aversion of the Jews to every thing which bears the Christian name, and their obstinate attachment to their ancient religion, have, in former years, discouraged all attempts to convert them to the Christian faith. And not only has their conver-

sion been neglected, but for many centuries they have been persecuted, plundered, and destroyed, by those who have called themselves Christians; they have not been permitted to enter their churches as worshippers, nor their dwellings as guests, nor reside in their territories, where Pagans and Mahometans have found an unmolested abode. While we, then, blame the blindness and incredulity of the descendants of Abraham, let us lament the folly and unkindness of the professed disciples of the mild and compassionate Redeemer. But a different spirit is now prevailing in many parts of Christendom, and a new era, as to the tribes of Israel, seems about to burst upon the world. Societies are formed in Europe and America for their benefit, and a disposition is said to be increasing, among the Jews, favorable to that Messiah and that religion which they have so long hated and rejected.

The history of this people certainly forms a striking evidence of the truth of divine revelation. They are a living and perpetual miracle, continuing to subsist as a distinct and peculiar race for upwards of three thousand years, intermixed among almost all the nations of the world, flowing forward in a full and continued stream, like the waters of the Rhone, without mixing with the waves of the expansive lake through which the passage lies to the ocean of eternity.

The number of the Jews in the United States is estimated at about four thousand. They have synagogues in Newport, R. I., the cities of New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, S. C., and in other parts

of the country. Their mode of worship is exceedingly interesting. With regard to the number of this people in the world, Blackwood's Magazine says: —

"The statistics of the Jewish population are among the most singular circumstances of this most singular of all people. Under all their calamities and dispersions, they seem to have remained at nearly the same amount as in the days of David and Solomon — never much more in prosperity, never much less after ages of suffering. Nothing like this has occurred in the history of any other race; Europe in general having doubled its population within the last hundred years, and England nearly tripled hers within the last half century; the proportion of America being still more rapid, and the world crowding in a constantly-increasing ratio. Yet the Jews seem to stand still in this vast and general movement. The population of Judea, in its most palmy days, probably did not exceed, if it reached, four millions. The numbers who entered Palestine from the wilderness were evidently not much more than three; and their census, according to the German statists, who are generally considered to be exact, is now nearly the same as that of the people under Moses — about three millions."

On the above, Judge Noah, of New York, a learned Jew, remarks: —

"We apprehend there is some error in the above statistics, and that the number of Jews throughout the world may be estimated at nearer six millions than three. There are more than a million in Poland

and Russia; in all Asia, there are full two millions; half a million in Austria; in the Barbary States and Africa, a million; in all Europe, two millions and a half. We do not think, during the most splendid periods of Jewish history, that they ever exceeded four millions; but then their colonies and countries held tributary in Europe and Asia amounted to many millions more. For example, at one period all Spain paid tribute to King Solomon; and all Spain and Portugal, at this day, are descendants of the Jews and Moors; and there are many thousands of Jews, in both those countries, now adhering in secret to the ancient faith of their fathers, while outwardly professing the Catholic religion. All the familiar Spanish and Portuguese names — Lopez, Mendez, Carvalho, Fonseca, Rodrigues, Peirara, Azavedo, Montefiores, &c. &c. — are of Jewish origin. Their numbers, therefore, will never be accurately known until the restoration, when thousands who, from convenience and pride, and some from apprehension, conceal their religion, will be most eager to avow it when their nation takes rank among the governments of the earth."

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